

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 118

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1987-88

COMPRISING PERIOD
17 JUNE—3 JULY 1987

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Chronology of "The Parliamentary Debates"

The Parliamentary History contains all that can be collected of the Legislative History of this country from the Conquest to the close of the XVIIIth Century (1803), 36 vols. The chief sources whence these Debates are derived are the Constitutional History, 24 vols.; Sir Simonds D'Ewes' Journal; Debates of the Commons in 1620 and 1621; Chandler and Timberland's Debates, 22 vols.; Grey's Debates of the Commons, from 1667 to 1694, 10 vols.; Almons Debates, 24 vols.; Debrett's Debates, 63 vols.; The Hardwicke Papers; Debates in Parliament by Dr. Johnson, &c. &c.

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 Clark, Hon. Alan Kenneth McKenzie (Plymouth, Sutton)
 Clark, David George (South Shields)
 Clark, Michael (Rochford)
 Clark, Sir William Gibson (Croydon, South)
 Clarke, Rt. Hon. Kenneth Harry QC (Rushcliffe)
 Clarke, Thomas CBE (Monklands, West)
 Clay, Robert Alan (Sunderland, North)
 Clelland, David Gordon (Tyne Bridge)
 Clwyd, Mrs. Ann (Cynon Valley)
 Cohen, Harry Michael (Leyton)
 Coleman, Donald Richard CBE (Neath)
 Colvin, Michael Keith Beale (Romsey and Waterside)
 Conway, Derek Leslie (Shrewsbury and Atcham)
 Cook, Francis (Stockton, North)
 Cook, Robert Finlayson (Livingston)
 Coombs, Anthony Michael Vincent (Wyre Forest)
 Coombs, Simon Christopher (Swindon)
 Cope, John Ambrose (Northavon)
 Corbett, Robin (Birmingham, Erdington)
 Corbyn, Jeremy Bernard (Islington, North)
 Cormack, Patrick Thomas (South Staffordshire)
 Couchman, James Randall (Gillingham)
 Cousins, James Mackay (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central)
 Cox, Thomas Michael (Tooting)
 Cran, James Douglas (Beverley)
 Critchley, Julian Michael Gordon (Aldershot)
 Crowther, Joseph Stanley (Rotherham)
 Cryer, George Robert (Bradford, South)
 Cummings, John Scott (Easington)
 Cunliffe, Lawrence Francis (Leigh)
 Cunningham, John Anderson (Copeland)
 Currie, Mrs. Edwina (South Derbyshire)
 Curry, David Maurice (Skipton and Ripon)

D

Dalyell, Thomas (Linlithgow)
 Darling, Alistair Maclean (Edinburgh, Central)
 Davies, Rt. Hon. David John Denzil (Llanelli)
 Davies, John Quentin (Stamford and Spalding)
 Davies, Ronald (Caerphilly)
 Davis, David Michael (Boothferry)
 Davis, Terence Anthony Gordon (Birmingham, Hodge Hill)
 Day, Stephen Richard (Cheadle)
 Dean, Sir Arthur Paul (Woodspring)
 Devlin, Timothy Robert (Stockton, South)
 Dewar, Donald Campbell (Glasgow, Garscadden)

Dickens, Geoffrey Kenneth (Littleborough and Saddleworth)
 Dicks, Terence Patrick (Hayes and Harlington)
 Dixon, Donald (Jarrow)
 Dobson, Frank Gordon (Holborn and St. Pancras)
 Doran, Frank (Aberdeen, South)
 Dorrell, Stephen James (Loughborough)
 Douglas, Richard Giles (Dunfermline, West)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Edinburgh, West)
 Dover, Densmore Ronald (Chorley)
 Duffy, Albert Edward Patrick (Sheffield, Attercliffe)
 Dunn, Robert John (Dartford)
 Dunnachie, James Francis (Glasgow, Pollok)
 Dunwoody, Hon. Mrs. Gwyneth Patricia (Crewe and Nantwich)
 Durant, Robert Anthony Bevis (Reading, West)
 Dykes, Hugh John Maxwell (Harrow, East)

E

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 Eastham, Kenneth (Manchester, Blackley)
 Eggar, Timothy John Grommelin (Enfield, North)
 Emery, Sir Peter Frank Hannibal (Honiton)
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 Evans, John (St. Helens, North)
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 Ewing, Harry (Falkirk, East)
 Ewing, Mrs. Margaret Anne (Moray)

F

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 Fallon, Michael Cathar (Darlington)
 Farr, Sir John Arnold (Harborough)
 Fatchett, Derek John (Leeds, Central)
 Faulds, Andrew Matthew William (Warley, East)
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 Fearn, Ronald Cyril (Southport)
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 Forman, Francis Nigel (Carshalton and Wallington)
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 Foulkes, George (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)
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 Fraser, John Denis (Norwood)
 Freeman, Roger Norman (Kettering)

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 Fry, Peter Derek (Wellingborough)
 Fyfe, Mrs. Maria (Glasgow, Maryhill)

G

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 Gale, Roger James (North Thanet)
 Galloway, George (Glasgow, Hillhead)
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 Garrett, William Edward (Wallsend)
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 Gilmour, Rt. Hon. Sir Ian Hedworth John Little
 (Chesham and Amersham)
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H

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 Hunt, John Leonard (Ravensbourne)
 Hunter, Andrew Robert Frederick (Basingstoke)
 Hurd, Rt. Hon. Douglas Richard, CBE (Witney)

I

Illsley, Eric Evelyn (Barnsley, Central)
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 Irvine, Michael Fraser (Ipswich)
 Irving, Charles Graham (Cheltenham)

J

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 Lord, Michael Nicholson (Central Suffolk)

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M

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 Martin, Michael John (Glasgow, Springburn)
 Martlew, Eric Anthony (Carlisle)
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 Maude, Francis Anthony Aylmer (North Warwickshire)
 Mawhinney, Brian Stanley (Peterborough)
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 (Tunbridge Wells)
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 Meale, Joseph Alan (Mansfield)
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 Michie, William (Sheffield, Heeley)

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 Morris, Michael Wolfgang Laurence (Northampton, South)
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 Morrison, Hon. Peter Hugh (City of Chester)
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 Moynihan, Hon. Colin Berkeley (Lewisham, East)
 Mudd, William David (Falmouth and Camborne)
 Mullin, Christopher John (Sunderland, South)
 Murphy, Paul Peter (Torfaen)

N

Neale, Gerrard Anthony (North Cornwall)
 Needham, Richard Francis (North Wiltshire)
 Nellist, David John (Coventry South East)
 Nelson, Richard Anthony (Chichester)
 Neubert, Michael Jon (Romford)
 Newton, Antony Harold OBE (Braintree)
 Nicholls, Patrick Charles Martyn (Teignbridge)
 Nicholson, David John (Taunton)
 Nicholson, Miss Emma Harriet (Torrige and West Devon)

O

Oakes, Rt. Hon. Gordon James (Halton)
 O'Brien, William (Normanton)
 O'Neill, Martin John (Clackmannan)
 Onslow, Cranley Gordon Douglas (Woking)
 Oppenheim, Phillip Anthony Charles Lawrence (Amber Valley)
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 Owen, Rt. Hon. the Dr. David Anthony Llewellyn (Plymouth)

P

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 Parkinson, Rt. Hon. Cecil Edward (Hertsmere)
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Patten, John Haggitt Charles (Oxford, West and Abingdon)
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 Powell, Raymond (Ogmore)
 Powell, William Rhys (Corby)
 Prescott, John Leslie (Kingston upon Hull East)
 Price, Sir David Ernest Campbell (Eastleigh)
 Primarolo, Ms. Dawn (Bristol, South)

Q

Quin, Miss Joyce Gwendolen (Gateshead, East)

R

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S

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 Salmond, Alexander Elliott Anderson (Banff and Buchan)

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T

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 Taylor, John Mark (Solihull)

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V

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W

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Worthington, Anthony (Clydebank and Milngavie)
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Young, Sir George Samuel Knatchbull (Ealing, Acton)
Younger, Rt. Hon. George Kenneth Hotson TD (Ayr)

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IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 118

FIRST VOLUME OF SESSION 1987-88

House of Commons

Wednesday 17 June 1987

The House being met; and, it being the first day of the meeting of this Parliament, pursuant to Proclamation SIR KENNETH ANTHONY BRADSHAW, KCB, Clerk of the House of Commons, CLIFFORD JOHN BOULTON, ESQUIRE, CB, Clerk Assistant, and DONALD WILLIAM LIMON, Principal Clerk of the Table Office, attending in the House, and the other Clerks attending, according to their duty, SIR ANTONY DEREK MAXWELL OULTON, KCB, QC, Clerk of the Crown in Chancery in Great Britain, delivered to the said SIR KENNETH ANTHONY BRADSHAW, a Book containing a List of the Names of the Members returned to serve in this Parliament.

Several of the Members repaired to their Seats.

THE RIGHT HON. SIR BERNARD RICHARD BRAINE took the Chair, pursuant to the Standing Order (Election of the Speaker).

Message to attend the Lords Commissioners;

The House went; and a Commission having been read for opening and holding the Parliament, the Lords Commissioners directed the House to proceed to the Election of a Speaker, and to present him tomorrow at half-past Two o'clock, in the House of Peers, for the Royal Approbation.

And the House having returned:—

Election of Speaker

2.48 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): May I first extend to you personally, Sir Bernard, hearty congratulations and a warm welcome in your new capacity as Father of the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] As the House has already testified, that will give great pleasure to your many friends on both sides.

As you and the House will know, Sir Bernard, our first duty as a new Parliament is to elect a Speaker. Accordingly, I beg to move,

That the Right Honourable Bruce Bernard Weatherill do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. Again, if I may speak personally, it gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to do that.

My right hon. Friend or the right hon. Gentleman, whichever is the correct form of address, and I came into the House together in 1964. We share links with the county of Surrey and we have been pretty good friends over the past 23 years. On this occasion I speak in knowledge of one thing which encourages me greatly. In 1983, the mover and seconder of the motion, Sir Humphrey Atkins and Jack Dormand, both old friends of this House who are no longer with us, but who may yet be Members of this Parliament, had a more difficult task to perform because it was the first time of asking. Since 1983 most of us have had the inestimable advantage of first-hand experience of the right hon. Gentleman as our Speaker. We know his strengths and his foibles, how patient he can be and how impatient we can make him. We know a great deal about him. He also knows a fair bit about us and that is no doubt of great advantage to him.

However, I hope that will not deter the right hon. Gentleman from allowing this motion to proceed. Although by a tradition set in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I by a member of my family the Speaker-Elect resists the gentle endeavours of his friends to persuade him to take the Chair, I am sure that the Speakership in the reign of our present monarch is a less dangerous task than in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Moreover, I expect that the House is more orderly.

The acceptance speech which the right hon. Gentleman made to the House in 1983 was naturally a model of its

[Mr. Cranley Onslow]

kind and in it he made several comments on the task of the Chair as he saw it and some promises to the House. One of his first comments on that occasion was that he had listened

"to many long and overlong speeches"

and he hoped that

"brevity will be the order of the day."

[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] In that context he thought it right to mention Privy Counsellors. I hope that you, Sir Bernard, will not take this amiss if I say that that came as music to the rest of us. In the light of his experience of the Chair it may be that the right hon. Gentleman may have something to say about overlong questions. It will be entirely right for him to remind us, as he did then, that "we are all equal here."—[*Official Report*, 15 June 1983; Vol. 44, c. 11]

Each of us comes with the same authority derived from our constituency and we are all on an equal footing as Members of this honourable House.

The most difficult task which may befall the right hon. Gentleman, if he is elected Speaker as I hope, will be that of balancing debates. It was something to which Opposition Members drew attention on the last occasion when we debated this. I think that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) said something about it. That task will not necessarily have been made much easier by the outcome of the recent election.

In 1983, the right hon. Gentleman told the House that he hoped to do something which all of us can testify that he has done and which has been of great value to us all. That was to make Speaker's House somewhere with "a family atmosphere" and to allow right hon. and hon. Members and their wives—[HON. MEMBERS: "And their husbands."]—and husbands access to it. That has been of great value to us all.

Over and above everything else, in 1983 the right hon. Gentleman promised that he would be faithful to this House and its Members in seeking absolute impartiality and fairness, in protecting minority rights as carefully as the rights of majorities and in upholding the high, historic traditions of the Speakership of this honourable House. The House knows that the right hon. Gentleman has discharged that promise right honourably. I can think of no one better to resume the Chair in this Parliament, and I commend the motion to the House.

2.54 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): In all my long years in the House I have never knowingly agreed to a proposition that was especially favoured by the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). However, on this occasion, I am happy to make two exceptions to that rule. First, I gladly join him in congratulating you, Sir Bernard, on being the new Father of the House. I think that you have won by only a short head, if I may say so, but I certainly wish you the very best success in the office, and thank you for the courtesies and kindness that you show the House.

On the second proposition, too, I am prepared to agree with the hon. Member for Woking, although I acknowledge that, like some others, I had some suspicions of the right hon. Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Weatherill) before he was elected Speaker in 1983. After all, he had served for some years in the Whips Office and

it is not always good that comes out of that. My suspicions were enhanced when I discovered that the motion was to be proposed by a Conservative ex-Chief Whip and seconded by a pairing Whip on this side. It was obviously a put-up job; the usual channels up to their usual tricks. However, it was not like that at all. In fact, the seconder of the motion on this side of the House—and I say nothing against the proposer—was Jack Dormand, whom all of us remember and whose commendation was sufficient for all of us on the Labour Benches.

I agree, too, that throughout the period for which he has sustained the office of Speaker, the right hon. Member for Croydon, North-East has discharged his duties in such a way as to bring great honour to this House. That does not mean that we have agreed with all his decisions. Indeed, no doubt some of use will contest some of his future decisions in our usual polite manner.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Hear, hear.

Mr. Foot: I know that I will carry my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) with me eventually; sometimes we are not so quick off the mark.

I say to the right hon. Member for Croydon, North-East sincerely that the office of Speaker is the very highest honour that the House of Commons can confer on one of its Members. That honour is greater in some senses than any other, because the Speaker more than anyone else embodies the very best traditions of the House and, in modern times, our democratic traditions. The most famous speech ever made by a Speaker of the House of Commons was one in which he defied the King. Others, too, have to be defied. Principalities, powers and Prime Ministers all have to be resisted at times, and the right hon. Gentleman has shown that he knows that to be a part of his functions. The right hon. Gentleman has many of the other qualities required by Speakers of this House, such as humour, wit and knowledge of all the ways of this place. Above all, the office of Speaker is a test of character. On that test, the right hon. Gentleman has come through with flying colours, and I am sure that he will do so again.

2.58 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Sir Bernard, the House will be relieved to know that I am not after the Speaker's job, but I should like to make a brief point to which I referred when the right hon. Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Weatherill) was first elected by the House to be Speaker. It is a tradition in the House that the occupant of the Chair, when selecting hon. Members to participate in a debate, chooses one from the Government, one from the Opposition, one from the Government, one from the Opposition, and so on. Within the time allocated to the Opposition, obviously the minority parties have to have their say as well.

I should like to point out that, when Scottish business is considered in the House, the Labour party is the majority party. We won the general election in Scotland, winning 50 of the 72 seats—more than all the parties put together. The Labour party is the majority party in Scotland and the Tory party has been reduced to a discredited rump of 10 seats. This will make matters increasingly difficult for not only the Government but the occupant of the Chair when Scottish legislation is considered. The 50-strong Scottish Labour party group is

determined to use every means at its disposal to thwart that legislation, because the Government received no mandate from the people of Scotland for it.

I therefore appeal in advance to the future occupant of the Chair when Scottish legislation is considered to bear in mind the completely different political composition of the House. The Labour party is the majority party in Scotland. If the occupant of the Chair does not bear that in mind, my fear is that, until Scotland has its own devolved Parliament, the people of Scotland will have decreasing respect for this over-centralised and unresponsive Parliament.

3.3 pm

Mr. Bernard Weatherill (Croydon, North-East) (*standing in his place*): Sir Bernard, you have occasionally charged me with failing to call you early in a debate, and I am most grateful to you today for not having turned the tables on me. I join the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) and the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) in warmly congratulating you on becoming Father of the House.

When I was first elected to the House in 1964, you had already been here for 14 years, Sir Bernard, and I well remember your help and kindness to me as a new Member. But you also have another reputation—that of having made the longest speech in this Chamber from the Back Benches since 1828. That was before the record was broken by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and almost certainly by Mr. John Golding, too. I hope that new Members—we all welcome the new Members here today—will follow your fine example in terms of generosity and courtesy but will refrain from entertaining us at great length in debate. We welcome you, Sir Bernard, as Father of the House. We know that you will fulfil that role with dignity and with great dedication.

In accordance with ancient custom, I now submit myself to the will of the House. In doing so, I wish to express my deep gratitude to the hon. Member for Woking and the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent for the kind and generous way in which they have proposed and seconded my re-election as Speaker of this ancient and honourable House. I am only sorry that the boy who stated so confidently on television that I was a mere tape recorder has not been present as a punishment.

No one is more conscious than I am of the high honour conferred on a Member who is chosen by the House to be its Speaker. When I was chosen four years ago, almost to the day, I promised to dedicate myself to the service of the House and to Members, irrespective of party allegiances, and to be faithful in seeking to be wholly impartial and fair. I do so again today, but I am daily aware of the frustration of Members and the difficulty of balancing the urgent claims of Back Benchers with those of Privy Councillors and of Front Benchers. Hon. Members have been sent here to speak and it is difficult for our constituents to understand that, if the Chair exercises fairness, their Member is unlikely to be called in a major debate many more than four times in a year. Last Session my Deputies and I, thanks to the operation of the 10-minute limit on speeches and the self-restraint of hon. Members, managed to make that an average of six. It is for that reason that I constantly appeal—I appeal again today—for short speeches. In response to the hon. Member for Woking, I appeal too for short supplementary questions. They are usually the more effective.

In the second year of my Speakership I received a present from my grandchildren—the mumps. As I was on my death bed—[*Laughter.*]—I listened to the House on radio. I am bound to say that I was appalled. On my return to duty, I set about seeing what could be done about it. Unhappily, the inevitably selected extracts from our proceedings by sound and not by sight give a distorted impression. The public are used to listening to a programme on something that has been specifically produced for broadcasting. Our debates, and especially Question time, are not like that. In Parliament, Ministers have to submit their policies to the sceptical audience of fellow politicians.

In addressing his own supporters Mr. Gladstone once said:

"It is not your job to run the country but it is your duty to hold to account those who do."

That is the classic role of Parliament and it cannot be scripted. The actions of enthusiasm, disbelief, boredom or amusement are the very stuff of parliamentary debate. Let us always remember, however, that at the heart of all the tensions that exist and the conflict of different policies we meet in Parliament to resolve our differences by free and fair debate, respecting our right to hold an opinion and the right of others to hold different opinions and to express them with equal freedom. This concept and the good name of Parliament are in the hands of every hon. Member. The discipline of Parliament is a self-discipline, and he who fails to accept it damages himself, his cause and the reputation of Parliament.

Before I resume my seat, I give a warm welcome to all new Members. I shall try to marry their faces with their names or vice versa as quickly as I can, but I hope that I may be given a little tolerance initially. I believe that Mr. Speaker should try to establish personal contact with hon. Members and I want all hon. Members to know, and especially new Members, that I am readily available to them all.

I wish to pay a tribute to the Deputy Speakers who shared the responsibility of the Chair with me during the previous Parliament. I value their knowledge and advice and I am indebted to them for their dedication and ability to sit far into the night and to stay awake.

Finally, I wish to say how grateful I am to my wife for the way in which she has supported me in my duties. Parliamentary spouses are the great unsung heroes and heroines of our trade. We do not acknowledge their contributions sufficiently, and we should, and I do.

I now submit myself with great humility, Sir Bernard, to the will of the House. If the great honour of Speakership is again conferred on me, I pledge myself anew to the service of Parliament and all its Members irrespective of party. I shall strive to maintain at all times impartiality and fairness.

Resolved,

That the Right Hon. Bruce Bernard Weatherill do take the Chair of this House as Speaker.

Whereupon, the RIGHT HON. SIR BERNARD BRAINE left the Chair, and the RIGHT HON. BERNARD WEATHERILL was taken out of his place and conducted to the Chair by Mr. CRANLEY ONSLOW and Mr. MICHAEL FOOT.

Mr. Speaker-Elect (*standing on the upper step*): I wish to express to the House my gratitude for the great honour

[Mr. Speaker-Elect]

that it has conferred upon me in re-electing me to this Chair. It is the greatest honour that can be conferred upon any Member of the House, and I am most deeply grateful.

Mr. Speaker-Elect sat down in the Chair.

Then the Mace (which before lay under the Table) was placed upon the Table.

3.10 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): Mr. Speaker-Elect, it is a great pleasure and an honour for me, on this day of unanimity, to be the first to offer you congratulations on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends on your election as Speaker. This House is the democratic authority of the country and the Speaker is its foremost upholder. Just as the general election secures the democratic right of the people to choose their representatives, so, Mr. Speaker-Elect, we choose you to ensure that freedom and order should reign in our House.

This time, Sir, you come to the Chair with the great experience of your previous tenure of office and we know from the qualities you have already shown that you will preside over our discussions with firmness, with fairness and with kindness.

It is of course difficult to find a fresh way of expressing our good wishes and congratulating you when following such eloquent and powerful contributions as those of the proposer and seconder which have already been made today. But St. Paul himself identified—albeit in a rather different context—the qualities that matter. The leader, he said, should be

“blameless, . . . vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, . . . not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity”.

Mr. Speaker-Elect, it is not possible to set out a blueprint or a job description for the onerous task that one of my predecessors so accurately described as the “linchpin of the chariot”.

Each of our great Speakers of the past has brought his own special skills and spirit to the task, which cannot simply be copied by his successors. Perhaps one of the most telling tributes was paid when it was said of one of your predecessors many years ago:

“He had always something to say that was agreeable to everybody, and used to take as much pleasure in telling a story to a man’s advantage as others generally do the contrary.”

Mr. Speaker-Elect, we already know that when, in the heat of debate, the tempers of others may shorten, yours will not, that when, in the excitement of a forcefully contested issue, others may seek to draw you into taking sides, you will remain resolutely impartial. We know that, when the noise of lively debate threatens to drown speakers on both sides, your call for order will carry authority, and your sense of humour will defuse wrath. We know these qualities are yours, and we know that the House has need of them; for like all its predecessors, this Parliament will generate heat as well as light and ours would be a limp and lifeless democracy if it did not.

It is sometimes said that the House has become more difficult and noisy than in the past. It is also averred that by comparison with the behaviour of some of our predecessors in past centuries, we are a model of conduct and calm. I suspect the truth is that, since the House elected Sir Thomas Hungerford its first Speaker 600 years

ago, and with each of the many Speakers who have followed, it has aspired to better courtesies than it has achieved. But there is today one important difference, to which you have already referred, Mr. Speaker-Elect. In the past, the number of people who heard directly the work of the House was necessarily limited. But now many of our liveliest moments go straight into millions of homes. We therefore have a heightened responsibility to assist you, Sir, in seeing that we live up to the best traditions of debate and democracy.

Mr. Speaker-Elect, the special place that this House occupies in the life of our nation, and in the wider world, means that your work as our representative at home and abroad is a very important part of your duties. I know that the whole House will join me in thanking you for the magnificent work that you have done representing this House overseas, and also for hosting the Commonwealth parliamentary conference here in London. We also thank you for the endless kindness and hospitality that you and Mrs. Speaker have shown not only to right hon. and hon. Members but to many others as well.

We admire the tireless work that you have undertaken on your appeal, where the result of your efforts can now be seen as the work takes place to restore St. Margaret’s to its former beauty.

At the beginning of this new Parliament we welcome you, Mr. Speaker-Elect, to your Chair. We pay tribute to you for the work that you have done already on our behalf, and we wish you well in the task ahead.

3.16 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Like the Prime Minister, I am delighted to join in the spirit of unanimity and equanimity that marks this occasion. Indeed, so strong are both these spirits that if it were practised elsewhere, doubtless it would now be known as democratic fusion.

It is a great pleasure to be able to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker-Elect, upon your re-election to the Chair. It is a position for which, as most of us expected, and as time has certainly shown, you are uniquely well suited, for you mix a sense of order with a sense of humour, and your natural dignity is made all the more convincing by your complete lack of pomposity. You have assembled those qualities together with the other essential attributes of a good Speaker—judicious amnesia, spasmodic hearing difficulty and a mastery of tactical myopia, all of which come in very handy.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker-Elect, your success is assured—indeed, was assured—and is very easily explained. Such has been the success of your past four years of office that it justifies a slight adjustment of your name. Frankly, I think that “Weatherill” is now somewhat inappropriate. “Weather-well” would suit the bill much better than that, or, given some of the tussles over which you have to preside, “Weather-all”. However, I am sure that you would not want to change your name, Mr. Speaker-Elect. I simply record that as the way in which I am sure you are regarded on both sides of the House.

Your task, Mr. Speaker-Elect, requires the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon and, from time to time, the voice of a Bengal lancer. Those attributes, too, you possess in great measure. We are all conscious that if we should fail to achieve the decorum that is proper for Parliament, you could always exercise your ability to address us in Urdu, and by that means still us to complete silence. Of that I am absolutely certain—not, of course, that you

are over-pious about decorum. That too is eternally to your credit. While we know that necessarily you have a strict view about the boundaries of parliamentary propriety and the levels of parliamentary decibels, and while you enforce that view vigorously and scrupulously, we are also aware that you do not consider that silence in this place is necessarily golden, realistic or democratic. Your view typifies—you have communicated this view outside the House also—your combination of robustness and reasonableness. I believe that the House is all the better for that.

Your attitude, Mr. Speaker-Elect, certainly will not bring you the misfortune suffered by Speakers in past centuries whose careers were so often brought to an untimely, not to say messy, conclusion by those whose displeasure they incurred. That fate is now reserved for dissident Cabinet Ministers and that is an altogether more genteel practice.

Your qualities are many, Sir. They earn you popularity, but thankfully they have never tempted you into indulgence. Even a Speaker-Elect as sensitive to moods and as accommodating by nature as you, cannot allow all hon. Members to speak on the day that they want, at the time that they want or even in the debate that they want. Many of us believe that such an attitude from the Chair would be a model for wider social organisation as well as an essential parliamentary requirement.

That refusal to allow all hon. Members to do what they want can be a cause of frustration. However, I am happy to say that you handle that problem with great tact and I congratulate you on that. You also share another quality with your predecessors. I recall one of your predecessors who, as Deputy Speaker, did not call me in a debate. As a Back Bencher, I had sat right through the debate until 9 o'clock in a state of constant eagerness. When the time came for the Front Bench spokesman to reply, I approached Mr. Deputy Speaker to register my disappointment at the fact that I had not caught his eye. Mr. Deputy Speaker, who later became a distinguished Speaker, but who must remain nameless, said, "There's sorry I am that you didn't catch my eye, Neil. But if it is any comfort I can tell you that you were a glint from time to time." New Members may take some comfort from that, as they can become very frustrated. As you and previous Speakers have always reminded the House, if hon. Members cannot make a contribution to a major debate, there are plenty of other opportunities to raise the question.

On such an occasion, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who was then the hon. Member for Ebbw Vale, might recall, we were present in the House to debate a very important statutory instrument at about 2 o'clock in the morning. Such was the importance and tension generated by the debate that most hon. Members had decided to relieve themselves of that tension by staying away. Consequently only the Minister, the Government Whip, my right hon. Friend formerly the Member for Ebbw Vale, my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) the Labour party Whip, and myself were in the House. The then Deputy Speaker, Sir Robert Grant-Ferris of blessed memory, was in the Chair and at that time in the morning he called my right hon. Friend the former hon. Member for Ebbw Vale and said: "Mr. Dingle Foot." Whereupon my right hon. Friend rose and without so much as a pause said, "Madam Deputy Speaker." That was a way of relieving the tension.

Mr. Speaker-Elect, the House is grateful to you for your service and assistance in the past and we wish you well for your future in office. We trust that, although that period will not be free from contention between parties, it will continue to be free from animosity between hon. Members and the Chair. We trust, too, that your future in office although it cannot be free of problems will never again find you in the unenviable position of having to deny to the House of Commons material which, completely unknown to you, had become widely and publicly available elsewhere. We trust that as you perform your weighty task, you will be assisted by a House of Commons that is well-mannered and well-informed and that will, at long last, have the good sense and confidence to allow its proceedings to be televised something in which I know that you, in common with me, believe enthusiastically.

Finally, I ask you not only to accept the good wishes and congratulations of the House but to convey our warm felicitations to your wife. There have been Mrs. Speakers before, but none can have brought more grace or generosity to that position, with all of its obligations—so much so that the term "Mrs. Speaker" is almost a constitutionally recognised title. That is a justified accolade in itself and it speaks volumes for your dear wife, but it also ensures the avoidance of embarrassment such as that suffered by a distinguished American who visited the Vatican recently and is alleged to have greeted His Holiness by inquiring, "How are you, and, tell me, how is Mrs. Pope?" That could not happen here, not least because of your excellent management of affairs. Long may it continue.

3.26 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Mr. Speaker-Elect, my Liberal and Social Democratic colleagues wish to join the congratulations to you on your re-election. I assure the leader of the Labour party that this is probably the only occasion when we shall agree to fusion, democratic or otherwise, with him or with the leader of the Conservative party, but we happily do so on this occasion.

When you were elected four years ago, we observed that you were the first Speaker to come from the Whips Office, where you had a reputation for straight dealing and fairness. That reputation has been enhanced by your period in the Chair. You have brought to the Chair a sense of authority, wisdom and humour which we all appreciate. You also have a further distinction which is important to us: you recognise the rights and importance of minorities in the House.

It is as well for us to recall that, wherever we sit in the House, we all represent minorities here, although I have to observe, looking across the Floor of the House, that some minorities are larger than others. But they are all minorities still. I look forward to the first meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee, when we shall be able to look across the Floor and observe that some minorities are smaller than others.

When we speak in the House, we speak not just on behalf of the numbers of us here represented but on behalf of the other 7 million people whom we represent on these Benches. You recognise that, Mr. Speaker-Elect, and we are grateful to you. We wish you well in the Chair and we, too, thank Mrs. Weatherill for working with you to make Speaker's House a home within the House.

3.28 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Mr. Speaker-Elect, the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), who proposed your election, which I warmly support, suggested by a slip of the tongue that all of us come here as equals. On reflection, he will discover that that is not quite accurate, because for 16 of us, whether we represent the majority or the minority in Northern Ireland, our equality is to some extent eroded because of the peculiar devices employed to govern Northern Ireland during the past 15 years. I express the hope, Sir, that that defect will be remedied while you are Speaker.

I express my warm congratulations and good wishes to you, Sir. During the election campaign, I got the distinct impression that, over on this island, party leaders were saying some unkind things about each other — in contrast to what was happening in Northern Ireland. But such is my faith in your powers of persuasion that I am sure that you will shortly effect reconciliation. Who knows — you may proceed from that to coalition and perhaps even power-sharing in due course. On behalf of the Members of the Ulster Unionist party I wish you well, Sir.

Mr. Speaker-Elect (Mr. Bernard Weatherill): I call Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

3.29 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): That is an understandable confusion, Sir. On behalf of the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru, I congratulate you on your re-election as Mr. Speaker-Elect, and thank you for the way in which you have carried out your duty of recognising the role of minority parties, be they national parties or other minorities, in this House. I thank you also for the indulgence that you have given to Back Benchers during our debates. I share with you the hope that during this Parliament we shall have an opportunity for an early debate on the televising of our proceedings, because I am well aware that one of your concerns is that the public should understand the nature of this House and see its relevance to the issues that concern them.

I pay tribute to the way in which you have attempted — within the rules of order of this House — to ensure that relevant matters are debated at the times when they are relevant. Similarly, you have produced an innovation in Question Time which many of my hon. Friends and many Conservative Members may not have fully supported at the time, but which has enabled us to move rapidly over certain questions and allowed us to have more time for discussing questions which may appear to have greater prominence on that day.

I commend you for those innovations and wish you well in further innovatory practices in the House.

3.31 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Mr. Speaker-Elect, on behalf of the Democratic Unionists in this House, I should like to congratulate you on your re-election to the Speaker's Chair. In the last House, Sir, you had an easy ride from the Ulster Unionists and the Democratic Unionists for some time. However, I can assure you that this time you will see us, I hope, and that your eye will be wide open when we stand.

In the past, Sir, you have been gracious to minorities in this House in giving them time to put their views to the House. As the Ulster people suffer under the great wrong that has been referred to by my right hon. Friend the

leader of the Ulster Unionist party, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), I am sure that in this Parliament you will continue to look favourably upon the Unionists as they put their case.

In commenting upon the Prime Minister's reference to holy writ, I should like to say that it is dangerous not to quote the whole passage. I hope that every hon. Member will go home and look up what Paul said in Timothy to find out why the Prime Minister left out some appropriate parts of that passage of holy scripture.

3.32 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Mr. Speaker-Elect, in rising to congratulate you, I do so with the specific purpose of making two requests of you. This is the 14th election of a Speaker that I have attended as a Member of the House, having been a Member under seven Speakers. The first of those, Colonel Clifton Brown, was elected Speaker in 1943. No Member of the House could fail to be impressed by the way in which tributes are paid and by the show of reluctance by Mr. Speaker-Elect and his gracious speech. Tomorrow, Sir, you go to the House of Lords, the House of Peers, to lay claim to the ancient privileges of the House. Those who know our parliamentary history understand the reason for all that.

However, Mr. Speaker-Elect, the House gives you great powers, not only the power to preside, the power to select or reject amendments, the power to make rulings, and the power to call speakers, but above all the power to influence the order of business in the House by the powers conveyed to you by the standing orders.

It would be a great mistake today if the House, in repeating the ancient ritual which it knows so well, were to assume that the challenge posed by Charles I when he came to the House has entirely disappeared. Of course, the Crown itself no longer challenges the House, but in my judgment, Ministers of the Crown do challenge the privileges of Parliament.

I cite two examples that have occurred in recent months. One is still the subject of a Committee of Privileges report that I cannot anticipate and relates to the Zircon film. The other relates to the publication of a book, when hon. Members were circumscribed in what they were able to say by rulings imposed on you and the House by the courts at the instance of Ministers. So indeed were the press and the Lobby, which are part of the same process of open government.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker-Elect, to defend us vigorously in this century from attempts by the Executive to control Members and our business in the way in which Mr. Speaker Lenthall did before.

Although this has been a cosy parliamentary occasion, there can be nobody listening to this debate or observing this Parliament who does not realise that we in Britain are in very troubled times. I am not questioning the outcome of the election, but we are now a polarised society. Many hon. Members will come to the House with appalling anxieties and problems that they will discover in their constituencies — due, perhaps, to a closure, rising unemployment or a crisis that affects them — and they will be pleading with you day after day to permit private notice questions and emergency debates under Standing Order No. 10.

The main business of the House is determined by agreement through the usual channels between the two Front Benches. But in electing you we give you the power

to vary the business where it is obviously necessary for the House of Commons to discuss matters that are of prime concern to people in certain areas—perhaps the inner cities—where burning issues arise. If people read that Parliament has had no time for them, they will draw their own conclusions about Parliament.

Hansard is the only publicly owned newspaper in Britain, and people are entitled to hear and read their anxieties reflected in debates in the House. Therefore, in congratulating you on your Speakership—for which personally I have every reason to be grateful—I beg you to be vigilant in defending us against the Executive and

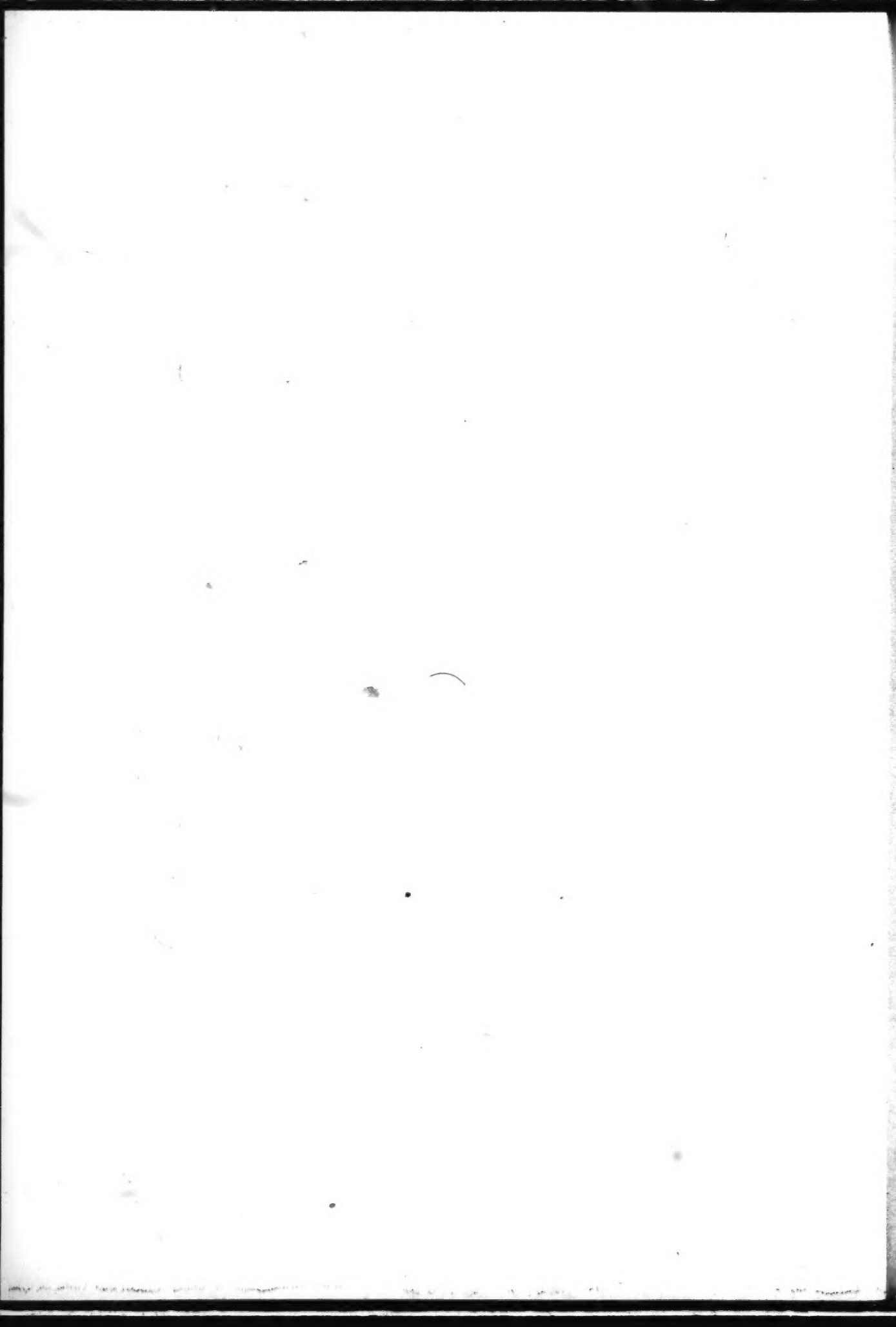
tolerant in allowing Members to bring to this Chamber anxieties that cause their constituents the deepest possible concern.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made, and Question proposed. That this House do now adjourn. [Mr. Boscawen.]

MR. SPEAKER-ELECT thereupon put the Question, which being agreed to, the House adjourned accordingly until tomorrow, and MR. SPEAKER-ELECT went away without the Mace before him.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes to Four o'clock.



House of Commons

Thursday 18 June 1987

The House being met at half-past Two o'clock, and MR. SPEAKER-ELECT having taken the Chair; Message to attend the Lords Commissioners; The House went; and, having returned—

Election of Speaker

Mr. Speaker: I have to report to the House that, in the House of Peers, Her Majesty, by Her Royal Commissioners, has been pleased to approve the choice made of myself for the Office of Speaker, and that I have, in your name and on your behalf, made claim by humble petition to Her Majesty to all your ancient and undoubted rights and privileges, particularly to the freedom of speech and debate, freedom from arrest and freedom of access to Her Majesty whenever occasion may require, and that the most favourable construction may be placed upon all your proceedings. All these Her Majesty, by Her Commissioners, has been pleased to confirm in as ample a manner as they have ever been granted or confirmed by herself or by any of Her Royal Predecessors.

My first duty to the House is to repeat my respectful acknowledgments and my grateful thanks for the great honour you have conferred on me in placing me in the Chair.

Members Sworn

Mr. Speaker: I must now call upon the Members of the House, according to the usual custom, to take the Oath of Allegiance at the Table of the House, first doing so myself.

Thereupon, MR. SPEAKER first alone, standing upon the upper step of the Chair, took and subscribed the Oath.

Mr. Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate my intentions with regard to the taking of the Oath by right hon. and hon. Members. I propose to call, first, the Government Front Bench, the Opposition Front Bench, then all Privy Councillors and former Ministers not included in those two groups, wherever they may be seated. Thereafter, I shall call 20 hon. Members from each side.

I shall continue until about half past 4. I shall then suspend the Sitting until half past 5 o'clock. I shall definitely return to the Chair at half past 5 o'clock, and again at 6 for the last time. I hope that the arrangements will be of assistance to hon. Members if they have something that they wish to do in the meantime. A similar procedure will apply tomorrow. The House will meet at half past 9 o'clock for Prayers. I shall again be in the Chair at 11 o'clock. That will be the last occasion. I understand that it will also be convenient to meet again for swearing on Wednesday next, when I shall be in the Chair from 2.30 pm.

I hope that this announcement will enable hon. Members to make their personal arrangements.

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by Law:

Right honourable Margaret Hilda, Mrs. Thatcher, Finchley.
Right honourable Neil Gordon Kinnock, Islwyn.
Right honourable Sir Richard Edward Geoffrey Howe, QC, Surrey, East.
Right honourable Nigel Lawson, Blaby.
Right honourable John Wakeham, Colchester, South and Maldon.
Right honourable Nicholas Ridley, Cirencester and Tewkesbury.
Right honourable Kenneth Wilfred Baker, Mole Valley.
Right honourable Peter Edward Walker, MBE, Worcester.
Right honourable John Roddick Russell MacGregor, OBE, Norfolk, South.
Right honourable Cecil Edward Parkinson, Hertsmere.
Right honourable John Edward Michael Moore, Croydon, Central.
Right honourable Henry Paul Guinness Channon, Southend, West.
Right honourable Lynda, Mrs. Chalker, Wallasey.
Right honourable Kenneth Harry Clarke, QC, Rushcliffe.
Right honourable Thomas Jeremy King, Bridgwater.
Right honourable David Charles Waddington, QC, Ribble Valley.
Right honourable Roy Sydney George Hattersley, Birmingham, Sparkbrook.
Derek Foster, esquire, Bishop Auckland.
Right honourable Peter David Shore, Bethnal Green and Stepney.
Right honourable Gerald Bernard Kaufman, Manchester, Gorton.
Right honourable John Smith, QC, Monklands, East.
John Anderson Cunningham, esquire, Copeland.

[Mr. Speaker]

John Leslie Prescott, esquire, Kingston upon Hull, East.
Right honourable Stanley Orme, Salford, East.
Stephen Barry Jones, esquire, Alyn and Deeside.
David George Clark, esquire, South Shields.
Right honourable Peter Kingsley Archer, QC, Warley,
West.

Brynmor Thomas John, esquire, Pontypridd.
Robert Hughes, esquire, Aberdeen, North.
Right honourable George Kenneth Hotson Younger, TD,
Ayr.

Ieuan Wyn Pritchard Roberts, esquire, Conwy.
Right honourable Sir Bernard Richard Braine, Castle
Point.

Bernard Harold Ian Halley Stewart, esquire, RD,
Hertfordshire, North.

David Bower Mitchell, esquire, Hampshire, North-West.
Right honourable Terence Langley Higgins, Worthing.
Right honourable Sir Ian Hedworth John Little Gilmour,
Baronet, Chesham and Amersham.

Giles Heneage Radice, esquire, Durham, North.
Sir Nicholas Walter Lyell, QC, Mid-Bedfordshire.
Right honourable Harold Julian Amery, Brighton,
Pavilion.

Ian Bruce Lang, esquire, Galloway and Upper Nithsdale.
John Haggitt Charles Patten, esquire, Oxford, West and
Abingdon.

Peter James Bottomley, esquire, Eltham.
Right honourable Michael James Hugh Alison, Selby.
Richard Francis, Earl of Kilmorey, known as Richard
Francis Needham, Wiltshire, North.

Sir Hugh Alexis Louis Rossi, Hornsey and Wood Green.
Brian Stanley Mawhinney, esquire, Peterborough.
James Alexander Douglas-Hamilton, esquire, commonly
called Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, Edinburgh,
West.

Francis Anthony Aylmer Maude, esquire, Warwickshire,
North.

Michael Bruce Forsyth, esquire, Stirling.
Marion Audrey, Mrs. Roe, Broxbourne.
Edwina, Mrs. Currie, Derbyshire, South.
Robert John Dunn, esquire, Dartford.
David John Mellor, esquire, QC, Putney.
Robert Victor Jackson, esquire, Wantage.
Patrick Charles Martyn Nicholls, esquire, Teinbridge.
Dennis Edward Skinner, esquire, Bolsover.

John Robert Louis Lee, esquire, Pendle.
Peter Hugh Morrison, esquire, commonly called the
honourable Peter Hugh Morrison, City of Chester.
Right honourable Alan John Williams, Swansea, West.
Right honourable Anthony Neil Wedgwood Benn,
Chesterfield.

Alan James Beith esquire, Berwick-upon-Tweed.
Right honourable James Henry Molyneaux, Lagan Valley.
Right honourable Malcolm Leslie Rifkind, QC,
Edinburgh, Pentlands.

Right honourable John David Taylor, Strangford.
Robert Finlayson Cook, esquire, Livingston.
Christopher Francis Patten, esquire, Bath.
Right honourable Denis Herbert Howell, Birmingham,
Small Heath.

Margaret Mary, Mrs Beckett, Derby, South.
Right honourable Bruce Millan, Glasgow, Govan.
Sir Trevor Herbert Harry Skeet, Bedfordshire, North.
Right honourable Denis Winston Healey, CH, MBE,

Leeds, East.

Sir Peter Frank Hannibal Emery, Honiton.
Stuart Bell, esquire, Middlesbrough.
Stuart Jeffrey Randall, esquire, Kingston upon Hull,
West.

Sir William Gibson Clark, Croydon, South.
Dafydd Elis Thomas, esquire, Meirionnydd Nant Conwy.
Reverend Ian Richard Kyle Paisley, Antrim, North.
Sir Hector Seymour Peter Monro, AE, Dumfries.
Mary Elaine, Mrs Kellett-Bowman, Lancaster.
Martin Redmond, esquire, Don Valley.
Dame Joan Christabel Jill Knight, DBE, Birmingham,
Edgbaston.

Sir Gerard Folliott Vaughan, Reading, East.
Roland Boyes, esquire, Houghton and Washington.
Joseph Kevin McNamara, esquire, Kingston upon Hull,
North.

John Marek, esquire, Wrexham.
Sir Michael Norman Shaw, Scarborough.
Right honourable Alfred Morris, Manchester,
Wythenshawe.

Sir John Arnold Farr, Harborough.
John Evans, esquire, St. Helens, North.
Andrew Welsh, esquire, Angus, East.
Right honourable Harold Walker, Doncaster, Central.

Sir Arthur Paul Dean, Woodspring.
Frank Gordon Dobson, esquire, Holborn and St. Pancras.
Norman Hogg, esquire, Cumbernauld and Kilsyth.
David Blunkett, esquire, Sheffield, Brightside.
William Armand Thomas Tristan Garel-Jones, esquire,
Watford.

John David Home Robertson, esquire, East Lothian.
Geraint Wyn Howells, esquire, Ceredigion and
Pembroke, North.

Derek Leslie Conway, esquire, Shrewsbury and Atcham.
John Ernest Douglas Delavelette, esquire, Winchester.
Ronald Cyril Fearn, esquire, Southport.
Terence Lewis, esquire, Worsley.

Jeffrey William Rooker, esquire, Birmingham, Perry Barr.
Michael Collins Welsh, esquire, Doncaster, North.
Peter Robert Cable Lloyd, esquire, Fareham.
Paul Marland, esquire, Gloucestershire, West.
Nicholas Raymond Winterton, esquire, Macclesfield.
George Robert Cryer, esquire, Bradford, South.
Stanley James Allen Hill, esquire, Southampton, Test.
James Francis Pawsey, esquire, Rugby and Kenilworth.

Peter Bruce Lilley, esquire, St. Albans.
Timothy Robert Devlin, esquire, Stockton, South.
George Islay Macneill Robertson, esquire, Hamilton.
Donald Richard Coleman, esquire, CBE, Neath.

George Malcolm Thornton, esquire, Crosby.
Peter Harry Steve Griffiths, esquire, Portsmouth, North.
James Francis Dunnachie, esquire, Glasgow, Pollok.
Eric Samuel Heffer, esquire, Liverpool, Walton.

Michael Cather Fallon, esquire, Darlington.
James Alexander Kilfedder, esquire, North Down.
Dr. Alan Glyn, ERD, Windsor and Maidenhead.
Jacques Arnold Arnold, esquire, Gravesham.
John Heydon Romaine Stokes, esquire, Halesowen and
Stourbridge.

Ralph Frederic Howell, esquire, Norfolk, North.
Thomas Graham, esquire, Renfrew, West and Inverclyde.
Anthony Michael Beaumont-Dark, esquire, Birmingham,
Selly Oak.

Joan Lestor, Eccles.
Douglas Charles French, esquire, Gloucester.

Dame Peggy Edith Fenner, DBE, Medway.
 Eric Douglas Harvey Hoyle, esquire, Warrington, North.
 Reverend William Martin Smyth, Belfast, South.
 Joyce Gwendolen Quin, Gateshead, East.
 Christopher John Fred Gill, esquire, RD, Ludlow.
 Edward Macmillan Taylor, esquire, Southend, East.
 John Graham Blackburn, esquire, Dudley, West.
 Clifford Forsythe, esquire, Antrim, South.
 Winston James Griffiths, esquire, Bridgend.
 Robert James Adley, esquire, Christchurch.
 Matthew Hadrian Marshall Carrington, esquire, Fulham.
 Dennis Murray Walters, esquire, MBE, Westbury.
 Elizabeth Joan, Mrs. Peacock, Batley and Spen.
 Andrew David Gilroy Bevan, esquire, Birmingham, Yardley.
 John Alan Redwood, esquire, Wokingham.
 Bruce Joseph Grocott, esquire, The Wrekin.
 John McFall, esquire, Dumbarton.
 Michael Reginald Harry Carttiss, esquire, Great Yarmouth.
 Richard Arthur Lloyd Livsey, esquire, Brecon and Radnor.
 Timothy Simon Janman, esquire, Thurrock.
 Eric Evelyn Illsley, esquire, Barnsley, Central.
 Christopher John Butler, esquire, Warrington, South.
 Alun Edward Michael, esquire, Cardiff, South and Penarth.
 Ivor Robert Stanbrook, esquire, Orpington.
 Allen McKay, esquire, Barnsley, West and Penistone.
 David Francis Haynes, esquire, Ashfield.
 David Marshall, esquire, Glasgow, Shettleston.
 David John Evans, esquire, Welwyn Hatfield.
 Stephen Richard Day, esquire, Cheadle.
 Gerald Neil Steinberg, esquire, Durham, City of.
 Andrew John Bower Mitchell, esquire, Gedling.
 Dennis Turner, esquire, Wolverhampton, South-East.
 Ronald Campbell, esquire, Blyth Valley.
 Nicholas Hugh Brown, esquire, Newcastle upon Tyne, East.
 Right honourable Gordon James Oakes, Halton.
 David Michael Davis, esquire, Boothferry.
 Thomas Clarke, esquire, CBE, Monklands, West.
 David John Pattison Martin, esquire, Portsmouth, South.
 James Douglas Cran, esquire, Beverley.
 Reverend Robert Thomas Willaim McCrea, Mid-Ulster.
 Terence Fields, esquire, Liverpool, Broadgreen.
 David Wright Young, esquire, Bolton, South-East.
 David Maurice Curry, esquire, Skipton and Ripon.
 David Julian Winnick, esquire, Walsall, North.
 Peter David Robinson, esquire, Belfast, East.
 Joseph Alan Meale, esquire, Mansfield.
 Simon Robert Key, esquire, Salisbury.
 Elliot Anthony Morley, esquire, Glanford and Scunthorpe.
 Jonathan Sayeed, esquire, Bristol, East.
 Eric Anthony Martlew, esquire, Carlisle.
 Alan Thomas Amos, esquire, Hexham.
 Dr. Charles Goodson-Wicks, Wimbeldon.
 Gregory Knight, esquire, Derby, North.
 Thomas McAvoy, esquire, Glasgow, Rutherglen.
 David Lawrence Shaw, esquire, Dover.
 Alan Thomas Howarth, esquire, CBE, Stratford-on-Avon.
 Robert Nelson Wareing, esquire, Liverpool, West Derby.
 David Wilshire, esquire, Spelthorne.
 Llinos, Mrs. Golding, Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Kenneth Melville Carlisle, esquire, Lincoln.
 David Arthur Stephen Fredinnick, esquire, Bosworth.
 Ian McCartney, esquire, Makerfield.
 Hugh Patrick Thompson, esquire, Norwich, North.
 Ian Colin Taylor, esquire, MBE, Esher.
 Hywel Rhodri Morgan, esquire, Cardiff, West.
 John Robert Greenway, esquire, Ryedale.
 George Edward Howarth, esquire, Knowsley, North.
 George James Buckley, esquire, Hemsworth.
 John Michael Jack, esquire, Fylde.
 Robert Michael Conal McNair-Wilson, esquire, Newbury.
 Terry Patchett, esquire, Barnsley, East.
 Ian Cameron Bruce, esquire, Dorset, South.
 Paul Yaw Boateng, esquire, Brent, South.
 Richard Charles Scrimgeour Shepherd, esquire, Aldridge-Brownhills.
 Martin John O'Neill, esquire, Clackmannan.
 Ian Grist, esquire, Cardiff, Central.
 Edward Loyden, esquire, Liverpool, Garston.
 John Hughes, esquire, Coventry, North-East.
 David Anthony Harris, esquire, St. Ives.
 Andrew David Smith, esquire, Oxford, East.
 James Randall Couchman, esquire, Gillingham.
 David Glynn Ashby, esquire, Leicestershire, North-West.
 Douglas John Henderson, esquire, Newcastle upon Tyne, North.
 Samuel Laird Galbraith, esquire, Strathkelvin and Bearsden.
 Patrick Michael Ernest David McNair-Wilson, esquire, New Forest.
 John Reid, esquire, Motherwell, North.
 Anthony Michael Vincent-Coombs, esquire, Wyre Forest.
 Bernard Alexander Montgomery Grant, esquire, Tottenham.
 Keith Douglas Rowland Mans, esquire, Wyre.
 Alastair Maclean Darling, esquire, Edinburgh, Central.
 Anthony Charles Lynton Blair, esquire, Sedgefield.
 John Quentin Davies, esquire, Stamford and Spalding.
 Ann Noreen Widdecombe, Maidstone.
 James Harold McCusker, esquire, Upper Bann.
 Roger Maurice Knapman, esquire, Stroud.
 Ernest Ross, esquire, Dundee, West.
 John McAllion, esquire, Dundee, East.
 Alistair James Hendrie Burt, esquire, Bury, North.
 Ronald Duncan McLaren Brown, esquire, Edinburgh, Leith.
 Simon Hugh McGuigan Burns, esquire, Chelmsford.
 Nigel Keith Anthony Standish Vaz, esquire, Leicester, East.
 Reginald Patrick Ground, esquire, QC, Feltham and Heston.
 Richard George Caborn, esquire, Sheffield, Central.
 Michael Anthony Latham, esquire, Rutland and Melton.
 Michael John Martin, esquire, Glasgow, Springburn.
 Paul Phillip Flynn, esquire, Newport, West.
 Patrick Allen McLoughlin, esquire, Derbyshire, West.
 Brian David Henderson Wilson, esquire, Cunningsame, North.
 Jeremy Bernard Corbyn, esquire, Islington, North.
 Robert Brannock Jones, esquire, Hertfordshire, West.
 John Scott Cummings, esquire, Easington.
 Rosemary Susan, Mrs. Barnes, Greenwich.
 David Anthony Andrew Amess, esquire, Basildon.

[Mr. Speaker]

David Austin Trippier, esquire, RD, Rossendale and Darwen.
 Harold Barnes, esquire, Derbyshire, North-East.
 David Anthony Evennett, esquire, Erith and Crayford.
 Nigel Griffiths, esquire, Edinburgh, South.
 Terence Patrick Dicks, esquire, Hayes and Harlington.
 Robert Kenneth Litherland, esquire, Manchester, Central.
 Lewis David Stevens, esquire, MBE, Nuneaton.
 Brian Charles John Sedgemoor, esquire, Hackney, South and Shoreditch.
 David John Nicholson, esquire, Taunton.
 Paul Peter Murphy, esquire, Torfaen.
 Barry John Anthony Field, esquire, Isle of Wight.
 Gareth Lodwig Wardell, esquire, Gower.
 Ann Clwyd, Cynon Valley.
 William Ross, esquire, Londonderry, East.
 Andrew Matthew William Faulds, esquire, Warley, East.
 David Lincoln Lightbown, esquire, Staffordshire, South-East.
 James Hood, esquire, Clydesdale.
 Roger Douglas King, esquire Birmingham, Northfield.
 James Wray, esquire, Glasgow, Provan.
 William David Mudd, esquire, Falmouth and Camborne.
 Kevin John Barron, esquire, Rother Valley.
 Roy Beggs, esquire, Antrim East.
 Peter Leslie Pike, esquire, Burnley.
 Antony Harold Newton, esquire, OBE, Braintree.
 Robert Vidal Rhodes James, esquire, Cambridge.
 David Martin Hinchliffe, esquire, Wakefield.
 Graham Frank James Bright, esquire, Luton, South.
 Right honourable John Morris, QC, Aberavon.
 Gillian Patricia, Mrs. Shephard, Norfolk, South-West.
 Adam Paterson Ingram, esquire, East Kilbride.
 Sir John Alec Biggs-Davison, Epping Forest.
 Dawn Primarolo Bristol, South.
 John Arthur Watts, esquire, Slough.
 Joan Lorraine Walley, Stoke-on-Trent, North.
 David John Maclean, esquire, Penrith and The Border.
 John Alston Maxton, esquire, Glasgow, Cathcart.
 Sir Peter Maudslay Horder, Horsham.
 Maria, Mrs. Fyfe, Glasgow, Maryhill.
 Cyril Irvine Patrick, esquire, Sheffield, Hallam.
 Kenneth Robert Livingstone, esquire, Brent, East.
 Sir David Ernest Campbell Price, Eastleigh.
 Ronald Davies, esquire, Caerphilly.
 Right honourable Sir Rhodes Boyson, Brent, North.
 Anthony Joseph Lloyd, esquire, Stretford.
 Harry Greenway, esquire, Ealing, North.
 Sean Francis Hughes, esquire, Knowsley, South.
 Robert Gurth Hughes, esquire, Harrow, West.
 Peter Hardy, esquire, Wentworth.
 Maureen Patricia, Mrs. Hicks, Wolverhampton, North-East.
 Alice, Mrs. Mahon, Halifax.
 Michael Wolfgang Laurence Morris, esquire, Northampton, South.
 Joseph Stanley Crowther, esquire, Rotherham.
 Gerald Francis Bowden, esquire, TD, Dulwich.
 Graham William Allen, esquire, Nottingham, North.
 Right honourable Leon Brittan, QC, Richmond (Yorks.).
 Christopher Robert Smith, esquire, Islington, South and Finsbury.
 John Mark Taylor, esquire, Solihull.
 John Daniel Wheeler, esquire, Westminster, North.

Right honourable Sir Patrick Barnabas Burke Mayhew, QC, Tunbridge Wells.
 Sir Philip Antony Fyson Buck, QC, Colchester, North.
 Malcolm Douglas Moss, esquire, Cambridgeshire, North-East.
 Michael Fraser Irvine, esquire, Ipswich.
 Jeremy Joseph James Hayes, esquire, Harlow.
 John Allan Stewart, esquire, Eastwood.
 Thomas Richard Arnold, esquire, Hazel Grove.
 Bentley John Heddle, esquire, Mid-Staffordshire.
 David Anthony Gerald Sumberg, esquire, Bury, South.
 John Valentine Butterfill, esquire, Bournemouth, West.
 Julian William Hendy Brazier, esquire, Canterbury.
 Sir Nicholas Cosmo Bonsor, Baronet, Upminster.
 Timothy John Robert Kirkhope, esquire, Leeds, North East.
 David John Porter, esquire, Waveney.
 Nicholas Jerome Bennett, esquire, Pembroke.
 Timothy John Rogerson Wood, esquire, Stevenage.
 John Cradock Maples, esquire, Lewisham, West.
 Conal Robert Gregory, esquire, York.
 Michael Woodcock, esquire, Ellesmere Port and Neston.
 Sir Philip Carter Goodhart, Beckenham.
 James Richard Holt, esquire, Langbaugh.
 James Norwich Arbuthnot, esquire, Wanstead and Woodford.
 Right honourable Thomas Michael Jopling, Westmorland and Lonsdale.
 Gavin Steel Strang, esquire, Edinburgh, East.
 Gerald Edward Bermingham, esquire, St. Helens, South.
 Sir William Fergus Montgomery, Altrincham and Sale.
 Robert Anthony Bevis Durant, esquire, Reading, West.
 Right honourable John Selwyn Gummer, Suffolk, Coastal.
 Right honourable Alick Laidlaw Buchanan-Smith, Kincardine and Deeside.
 Robert Adam Ross MacLennan, esquire, Caithness and Sutherland.
 David James Fletcher Hunt, esquire, MBE, Wirral, West.
 George Gordon Harvey Walden, esquire, CMG, Buckingham.
 David Laidlaw Knox, esquire, Staffordshire, Moorlands.
 Calum Alastair MacDonald, esquire, Western Isles.
 Alan Gordon Barraclough Haselhurst, esquire, Saffron Walden.
 John David McWilliam, esquire, Blaydon.
 Peter Temple-Morris, esquire, Leominster.
 Sir John Stradling Thomas, Monmouth.
 Mark Fisher, esquire, Stoke-on-Trent, Central.
 Virginia Hilda Brunette Maxwell, Mrs. Bottomley, Surrey, South-West.

4.37 pm

Mr. Speaker: The sitting is suspended till half past 5 o'clock.

5.30 pm

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by Law:

Jane Ann, Mrs. Winterton, Congleton.
 Norman Findlay Buchan, esquire, Paisley, South.
 Simon Christopher Coombs, esquire, Swindon.
 Allender Steele Adams, esquire, Paisley, North.
 Andrew John Bernard Rowe, esquire, Mid-Kent.
 Lawrence Francis Cunliffe, esquire, Leigh.
 Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, MBE, Hampstead and Highgate.

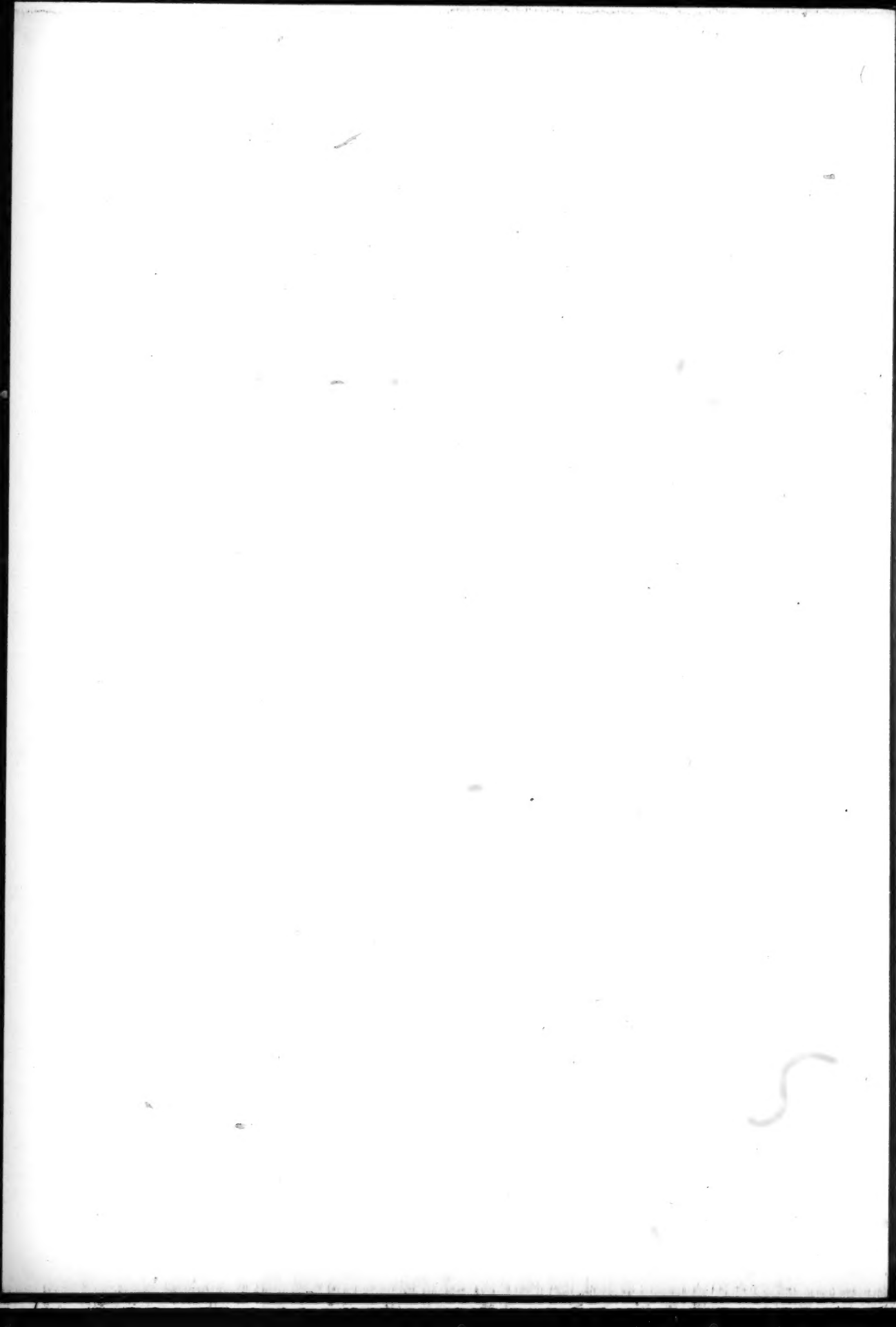
Thomas Pendry, esquire, Stalybridge and Hyde.
 Patrick Thomas Cormack, esquire, Staffordshire, South.
 Maxwell Francis Madden, esquire, Bradford, West.
 Timothy Eric Boswell, esquire, Daventry.
 John Cameron Cartwright, esquire, Woolwich.
 Ian David Twinn, esquire, Edmonton.
 Marjorie Mowlam, Redcar.
 Hilary Jane Armstrong, Durham, North-West.
 Robert James Atkins, esquire, South Ribble.
 Kenneth Harvard Hind, esquire, Lancashire, West.
 Edward Rowlands, esquire, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney.
 Michael Denzil Xavier Portillo, esquire, Enfield, Southgate.
 George Galloway, esquire, Glasgow, Hillhead.
 Andrew Raikes Hargreaves, esquire, Birmingham, Hall Green.
 George Foulkes, esquire, Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley.
 Theresa Ellen, Mrs. Gorman, Billericay.
 Anthony Worthington, esquire, Clydebank and Milngavie.
 Robert Parry, esquire, Liverpool, Riverside.
 Cyril Smith, esquire, MBE, Rochdale.
 Stephen James Dorrell, esquire, Loughborough.
 Michael Hugh Meacher, esquire, Oldham, West.
 Antony Rowland Favell, esquire, Stockport.
 Mildred, Mrs. Gordon, Bow and Poplar.
 Michael Nicholson Lord, esquire, Suffolk, Central.
 Allan Roberts, esquire, Bootle.
 William Michie, esquire, Sheffield, Heeley.
 Charles Frederick Wardle, esquire, Bexhill and Battle.
 Joan Mary, Mrs. Ruddock, Lewisham, Deptford.
 John Leonard Hunt, esquire, Ravensbourne.
 James Gerald Douglas Howarth, esquire, Cannock and Burntwood.
 Audrey, Mrs. Wise, Preston.
 Francis Nigel Forman, esquire, Carshalton and Wallington.
 William Arthur Waldegrave, esquire, commonly called the honourable William Arthur Waldegrave, Bristol, West.
 Sir Peter Hannay Bailey Tapsell, East Lindsey.
 Timothy Stephen Kenneth Yeo, esquire, Suffolk, South.
 Michael Knowles, esquire, Nottingham, East.

Nicholas Brian Baker, esquire, Dorset, North.
 James Edward Thornton Paice, esquire, Cambridgeshire, South-East.
 Robin Clifford Squire, esquire, Hornchurch.
 Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Wealden.
 Donald Campbell Dewar, esquire, Glasgow, Garscadden.
 Thomas Geoffrey Sackville, esquire, commonly called the honourable Thomas Geoffrey Sackville, Bolton, West.
 David Philip Heathcote-Amory, esquire, Wells.
 Nicholas William Budgen, esquire, Wolverhampton, South-West.
 Edward Kevin McGrady, esquire, South Down.
 Frank Field, esquire, Birkenhead.
 John Rankin Rathbone, esquire, Lewes.
 Michael Jon Neubert, esquire, Romford.
 Eric Forth, esquire, Mid-Worcestershire.
 Nigel John Spearing, esquire, Newham, South.
 Sir Brandon Meredith Rhys Williams, Baronet, Kensington.
 Jeremy James Hanley, esquire, Richmond and Barnes.
 Donald Anderson, esquire, Swansea, East.
 John Arbuthnot Ducane Wilkinson, esquire, Ruislip-Northwood.
 Josephine Richardson, Barking.
 David John Nellist, esquire, Coventry, South-East.
 Alan Wynne Williams, esquire, Carmarthen.
 Timothy Alan Davan Sainsbury, esquire, commonly called the honourable Timothy Alan Davan Sainsbury, Hove.
 Cyril David Townsend, esquire, Bexleyheath.
 Right honourable John William Gilbert, Dudley, East.
 Christopher John Mullin, esquire, Sunderland, South.
 Raymond William Whitney, esquire, OBE, Wycombe.
 Mark Alexander Lennox-Boyd, esquire, commonly called the honourable Mark Alexander Lennox-Boyd, Morecambe and Lunesdale.
 Geoffrey Robinson, esquire, Coventry, North-West.
 Gary Peter Anthony Waller, esquire, Keighley.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Lennox-Boyd.*]

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes past Six o'clock.



House of Commons

Friday 19 June 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate that after calling on all hon. Members in the Chamber to take the Oath of to Affirm I shall suspend the Sitting until 11 am. That will be the last occasion today. On Wednesday next I shall be in the Chair from 2.30 pm.

Members Sworn

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by Law:

Ronald Timothy Renton, esquire, Mid-Sussex.
 Jeremy William Bray, esquire, Motherwell South.
 Bruce Thomas George, esquire, Walsall, South.
 John Laurence Garrett, esquire, Norwich, South.
 Angela Claire Rosemary, Mrs. Rumbold, CBE, Mitcham and Morden.
 Christopher Robert Chope, esquire, OBE, Southampton, Itchen.
 Rober Arthur McCrindle, esquire, Brentwood and Ongar.
 Robert Thomas Boscawen, esquire, MC, commonly called the honourable Robert Thomas Boscawen, Somerton and Frome.
 Alfred William Wiggin, esquire, TD, Weston-super-Mare.
 James Wilton Spicer, esquire, West Dorset.
 Julian Michael Shersby, esquire, Uxbridge.
 Andrew Francis Bennett, esquire, Denton and Reddish.
 Sydney Brookes Chapman, esquire, Chipping Barnet.
 Alexander Eadie, esquire, BEM, Midlothian.
 Right honourable Merlyn Rees, Morley and Leeds, South.
 Nicholas Paul Scott, esquire, MBE, Chelsea.
 Sir John Giles Dunkerley Shaw, Pudsey.
 Right honourable Sir Peter Allan Renshaw Blaker, KCMG, Blackpool, South.
 Jonathan William Patrick Aitken, esquire, South Thanet.
 Colin Berkeley Moynihan, esquire, commonly called the honourable Colin Berkeley Moynihan, Lewisham, East.
 Alexander Charles Carlile, esquire, QC, Montgomery.
 Douglas Martin Hogg, esquire, commonly called the honourable Douglas Martin Hogg, Grantham.
 William David Madel, esquire, South-West Bedfordshire.
 Sydney James Bidwell, esquire, Ealing, Southall.
 Keith John Charles Bradley, esquire, Manchester, Withington.
 Simon Henry Ward Hughes, esquire, Southwark and Bermondsey.
 Andrew James MacKay, esquire, East Berkshire.
 David Neil Macfarlane, esquire, Sutton and Cheam.
 Right honourable John Paul Stanley, Tonbridge and Malling.
 Sir Dudley Gordon Smith, Warwick and Leamington.
 Andrew Robert Frederick Hunter, esquire, Basingstoke.
 Rupert William Simon Allason esquire, Torbay.
 Arthur Nicholas Winston Soames, esquire, commonly called the honourable Arthur Nicholas Winston Soames, Crawley.
 Richard Thain Alexander, esquire, Newark.
 Emma Harriet Nicholson, Torrjidge and West Devon.
 Right honourable Richard Napier Luce, Shoreham.
 Timothy John Smith, esquire, Beaconsfield.
 Timothy John Crommelin Eggar, esquire, Enfield, North.
 Right honourable David John Denzil Davies, Llanelli.
 Greville Ewan Janner, esquire, QC, commonly called the honourable Greville Ewan Janner, Leicester, West.
 William Nigel Paul Cash, esquire, Stafford.
 James Theodore Lester, esquire, Broxstowe.
 John Gordon Hannam, esquire, Exeter.
 John Ambrose Cope, esquire, Northavon.
 Alastair Robertson Goodlad, esquire, Eddisbury.
 Robert George Banks, esquire, Harrogate.
 Right honourable Sir Geoffrey Edwin Pattie, Chertsey and Walton.

[Mr. Speaker]

Richard Patrick Tracey, esquire, Surbiton.
 Geoffrey Lofthouse, esquire, Pontefract and Castleford.
 William O'Brien, esquire, Normanton.
 Robert Adrian Hicks, esquire, South-East Cornwall.
 Alfred Cecil Walker, esquire, Belfast, North.
 James Mackay Cousins, esquire, Newcastle upon Tyne, Central.
 Roger Denis Moate, esquire, Faversham.
 Derek John Fatchett, esquire, Leeds, Central.
 John Dominic Battle, esquire, Leeds, West.
 Sir John Marcus Fox, MBE, Shipley.
 Jack Heywood Aspinwall, esquire, Wansdyke.
 Right honourable Peter Norman Fowler, Sutton Coldfield.
 Cecil Simon Franks, esquire, Barrow and Furness.
 Archibald Gavin Hamilton, esquire, commonly called the honourable Archibald Gavin Hamilton, Epsom and Ewell.
 Sir George Samuel Knatchbull Young, Baronet, Ealing, Acton.
 Robert John Maxwell-Hyslop, esquire, Tiverton.
 John Crocket Bowis, esquire, Battersea.
 Right honourable Norman Stewart Hughson Lamont, Kingston upon Thames.
 Right honourable John Major, Huntingdon.
 Hugo Hawksley Fitzthomas Summerson, esquire, Walthamstow.
 Graham Edward Galloway Riddick, esquire, Colne Valley.

10.23 am

Mr. Speaker: The sitting is suspended until 11 o'clock.

11 am

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by Law:

Sir Julian Errington Ridsdale, CBE, Harwich.
 Norman Alexander Miscampbell, esquire, QC, Blackpool North.
 Richard Lewis Page, esquire, South-West Hertfordshire.
 Bowen Wells, esquire, Hertford and Stortford.
 Ronald Leighton, esquire, Newham, North-East.
 Charles Peter Kennedy, esquire, Ross, Cromarty and Skye.
 William McKelvey, esquire, Kilmarnock and Loudoun.
 Antony Rivers Marlow, esquire, Northampton, North.
 Mostyn Neil Hamilton, esquire, Tatton.
 Keith Hampson, esquire, Leeds, North-West.
 John Denis Fraser, esquire, Norwood.
 Humfrey Jonathan Malins, esquire, Croydon, North-West.
 Dr. the Right Honourable David Anthony Llewellyn Owen, Plymouth, Devonport.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved,

That this House do now adjourn till Wednesday 24 June.—[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 24 June 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate that after calling upon all hon. Members in the Chamber to take the Oath or to Affirm I shall suspend the sitting until 4 pm. I shall again be in the Chair at 5 pm, and again at 6 pm. That will be the last occasion today.

Tomorrow, after the State Opening of Parliament, I shall resume the Chair at 2.15 pm and hope to complete the swearing in of hon. Members before the business of the House begins.

Before we swear in today, it might be for the convenience of the House if we reverted to a former practice and swore in Bench by Bench, on alternate sides of the House, starting with the Front Benches.

Members Sworn

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by Law:

Peter Leonard Brooke, esquire, commonly called the honourable Peter Leonard Brooke, City of London and Westminster, South.
 Bryan Charles Gould, esquire, Dagenham.
 John Patrick Butcher, esquire, Coventry, South-West.
 Roger Stott, esquire, CBE, Wigan.
 Donald Thompson, esquire, Calder Valley.
 Raymond Powell, esquire, Ogmores.
 William Michael Hardy Spicer, esquire, Worcestershire, South.
 Allan Ralph Rogers, esquire, Rhondda.
 Peter John Viggers, esquire, Gosport.
 Diane Julie Abbott, Hackney, North and Stoke Newington.
 Michael John Mates, esquire, Hampshire, East.
 Stuart Kingsley Holland, esquire, Vauxhall.
 Sir Eldon Wylie Griffiths, esquire, Bury St. Edmunds.
 Winifred Ann, Mrs. Taylor, Dewsbury.
 Edward Julian Egerton, Leigh, esquire, Gainsborough and Horncastle.
 Edward Leadbitter, esquire, Hartlepool.
 Right honourable Edward Richard George Heath, MBE, Old Bexley and Sidcup.
 Michael Charles Stern, esquire, Bristol, North-West.
 Joseph William Ashton, esquire, Bassetlaw.
 Antony Speller, esquire, Devon, North.
 Right honourable Robert Edward Sheldon, Ashton-under-Lyne.
 Sir John Anthony Grant, Cambridgeshire, South-West.
 Richard Giles, Douglas, esquire, Dunfermline, West.
 Michael Howard, esquire, QC, Folkestone and Hythe.
 Kenneth Eastham, esquire, Manchester, Blackley.
 Dr. Lewis George Moonie, Kirkcaldy.
 Julian Michael Gordon Critchley, esquire, Aldershot.
 David Gordon Clelland, esquire, Tyne Bridge.
 William Connoll Walker, esquire, Tayside, North.
 Donald Dixon, esquire, Jarrow.
 John Ernest Townend, esquire, Bridlington.
 James Callaghan, esquire, Heywood and Middleton.
 Nicholas Hardwick Fairbairn, esquire, QC, Perth and Kinross.
 Seamus Mallon, esquire, Newry and Armagh.
 Martin Henry Flannery, esquire, Sheffield, Hillsborough.
 William Michael John Grylls, esquire, Surrey, North-West.
 Janet Evelyn Fookes, Plymouth, Drake.
 Robert McTaggart, esquire, Glasgow, Central.
 John Devereux Ward, esquire, CBE, Poole.
 Henry Baird McLeish, esquire, Fife, Central.
 Harriet Ruth Harman, Peckham.
 Charles Graham Irving, esquire, Cheltenham.
 Dafydd Wigley, esquire, Caernarfon.
 Ieuan Wyn Jones, esquire, Ynys Môn.
 Margaret Anne, Mrs. Ewing, Moray.
 Richard Anthony Nelson, esquire, Chichester.
 Alexander Elliott Anderson Salmond, esquire, Banff and Buchan.
 Dr. Michael Clark, Rochford.
 Spencer Lee Batiste, esquire, Elmet.
 David Patrick Paul Alton, esquire, Liverpool, Mossley Hill.

[Mr. Speaker]

Geoffrey Kenneth Dickens, esquire, Littleborough and Saddleworth.

James Robert Wallace, esquire, Orkney and Shetland.

Joseph Kenneth Hargreaves, esquire, Hyndburn.

Harry Ewing, esquire, Falkirk, East.

Walter Menzies Campbell, esquire, CBE, QC, Fife, North-East.

Francis Cook, esquire, Stockton, North.

Martin Maurice Brandon-Bravo, esquire, Nottingham, South.

John Thompson, esquire, Wansbeck.

Colin Ryley Shepherd, esquire, Hereford.

Charles Patrick Wall, esquire, Bradford, North.

Right honourable Michael Ray Dibdin Heseltine, Henley.

Robert Alan Clay, esquire, Sunderland, North.

Antony Brian Baldry, esquire, Banbury.

Betty Boothroyd, West Bromwich, West.

Roger James Gale, esquire, Thanet, North.

John Whitaker Straw, esquire, Blackburn.

Frank Doran, esquire, Aberdeen, South.

Right honourable Michael Mackintosh Foot, Blaenau Gwent.

John Michael Gorst, esquire, Hendon, North.

James Marshall, esquire, Leicester, South.

John Leslie Marshall, esquire, Hendon, South.

Terence Anthony Gordon Davis, esquire, Birmingham, Modge Hill.

Robin Corbett, esquire, Birmingham, Erdington.

Hilary Duppa Miller, esquire, Bromsgrove.

Winston Spencer Churchill, esquire, Davyhulme.

Ian Reginald Edward Gow, esquire, TD, Eastbourne.

William Rhys Powell, esquire, Corby.

Sir Richard Bernard Frank Stewart Body, Holland with Boston.

Right honourable David Arthur Russell Howell, Guildford.

Henry Campbell Bellingham, esquire, Norfolk, North-West.

Iain Campbell Mills, esquire, Meriden.

Gerrard Anthony Neale, esquire, Cornwall, North.

Peter Derek Fry, esquire, Wellingborough.

Gwilym Hadyn Jones, esquire, Cardiff, North.

Right honourable Douglas Richard Hurd, CBE, Witney.

Keith William Twort Raffan, esquire, Delyn.

Peter Giles Thurnham, esquire, Bolton, North-East.

Right honourable Sir Bernard John Hayhoe, Brentford and Isleworth.

Neil Gordon Thorne, esquire, OBE, TD, Ilford, South.

Kenneth Maginnis, esquire, Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

Right honourable Timothy Hugh Francis Raison, Aylesbury.

Peter Lewis Rost, esquire, Erewash.

Right honourable William John Biffen, Shropshire, North.

Geoffrey Mark Wolfson, esquire, Sevenoaks.

Sir David Russell Johnston, Inverness, Nairn and Locaber.

Malcolm Gray Bruce, esquire, Gordon.

Janet Ray, Mrs Michie, Argyll and Bute.

George Arthur Gardiner, esquire, Reigate.

Harry Michael Cohen, esquire, Leyton.

James Alexander Lamond, esquire, Oldham, Central and Royton.

Michael Russell Brown, esquire, Brigg and Cleethorpes.

James Gordon Brown, esquire, Dunfermline, East.

Barry John Sheerman, esquire, Huddersfield.

Cranley Gordon Douglas Onslow, esquire, Woking.

Tam Dalyell, esquire, Linlithgow.

Jeremy John Durham Ashdown, esquire, Yeovil.

Vivian Walter Hough Bendall, esquire, Ilford, North.

Matthew Owen John Taylor, esquire, Truro.

Clive Stafford Soley, esquire, Hammersmith.

Tony Banks, esquire, Newham, North-West.

Right honourable Norman Beresford Tebbit, Chingford.

Thomas Michael Cox, esquire, Tooting.

Gwyneth Patricia, Mrs Dunwoody, commonly called the honourable Mrs Gwyneth Patricia Dunwoody, Crewe and Nantwich.

3.30 pm

Mr. Speaker: The sitting is suspended until 4 o'clock.

4 pm

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by Law:

Alan Kenneth McKenzie Clark, esquire, commonly called the honourable Alan Kenneth McKenzie Clark, Plymouth, Sutton.

William Richard Benyon, esquire, Milton Keynes.

David Anthony Atkinson, esquire, Bournemouth, East.

Dennis Andrew Canavan, esquire, Falkirk, West.

Charles Andrew Morrison, esquire, commonly called the honourable Charles Andrew Morrison, Devizes.

Norman Anthony Godman, esquire, Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Archibald Johnstone Kirkwood, esquire, Roxburgh and Berwickshire.

Hugh John Maxwell Dykes, esquire, Harrow, East.

George Barrington Porter, esquire, Wirral, South.

Kenneth Robin Warren, esquire, Hastings and Rye.

Roger Edward Sims, esquire, Chislehurst.

Robert Michael Marshall, esquire, Arundel.

Ivan John Lawrence, esquire, QC, Burton.

Right honourable David Martin Scott Steel, Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale.

Neville Guthrie Trotter, esquire, Tynemouth.

Richard Andrew Ryder, esquire, OBE, Mid-Norfolk.

Roger Norman Freeman, esquire, Kettering.

Andrew Struthers Stewart, esquire, Sherwood.

4.21 pm

Mr. Speaker: The sitting is suspended until 5 o'clock.

5 pm

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by law:

William Edward Garrett, esquire, Wallsend.

Sir Anthony John Charles Meyer, Baronet, Clwyd, North-West.

Right honourable Jack Ashley, CH, Stoke-on-Trent, South.

Phillip Anthony Charles Lawrence Oppenheim, esquire, Amber Valley.

Anthony David Steen, esquire, South Hams.

Peter Charles Snape, esquire, West Bromwich, East.

5.20 pm

Mr. Speaker: The sitting is suspended until 6 o'clock.

6 pm

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by Law:

Christopher James Hawkins, esquire, High Peak.

Densmore Ronald Dover, esquire, Chorley.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved. That this House do now adjourn till tomorrow at twenty-five minutes past Eleven o'clock.

[Mr. Ryder.]

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes past Six o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 25 June 1987

The House met at twenty-five minutes past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

Message to attend Her Majesty:

The House went:—and having returned:

The Sitting was suspended until fifteen minutes past Two o'clock, and then resumed.

Members Sworn

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by Law:

Dale, Norman Campbell-Savours, esquire, Workington.
John Hume, esquire, Foyle.
Michael Keith Beale Colvin, esquire, Romsey and Waterside.
Herbert Keith Speed, esquire, RD, Ashford.
Albert Edward Patrick Duffy, esquire, Sheffield, Attercliffe.
Sir Herbert Raymond Gower, Vale of Glamorgan.
Royston John Hughes, esquire, Newport, East.
David Lambie, esquire, Cunningham, South.
Martyn David Jones, esquire, Clywd, South-West.
Andrew Bowden, esquire, MBE, Brighton, Kempdown.
Clare Short, Birmingham, Ladywood.
John Russell Carlisle, esquire, Luton, North.

SESSIONAL ORDERS

ELECTIONS

Ordered,

That all Members who are returned for two or more places in any part of the United Kingdom to make their Election for which of the places they will serve, within one week after it shall appear that there is no question upon the Return for that place; and if anything shall come in question touching the Return or Election of any Member, he is to withdraw during the time the matter is in debate; and that all Members returned upon double Returns do withdraw till their Returns are determined.

Resolved,

That no Peer of the Realm, except a Peer of Ireland, hath any right to give his vote in the Election of any Member to serve in Parliament.

Resolved,

That if it shall appear that any person hath been elected or returned a Member of this House, or endeavoured so to be, by Bribery or any other corrupt practices, this House will proceed with the utmost severity against all such persons as shall have been wilfully concerned in such Bribery or other corrupt practices.

WITNESSES

Resolved,

That if it shall appear that any person hath been tampering with any Witness, in respect of his evidence to be given to this

House, or any Committee thereof, or directly or indirectly hath endeavoured to deter or hinder any person from appearing or giving evidence the same is declared to be a high crime and misdemeanour; and this House will proceed with the utmost severity against such offender.

Resolved,

That if it shall appear that any person hath given false evidence in any case before this House, or any Committee thereof, this House will proceed with the utmost severity against such offender.

METROPOLITAN POLICE

Ordered,

That the Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis do take care that during the Session of Parliament the passages through the streets leading to this House be kept free and open and that no obstruction be permitted to hinder the passage of Members to and from this House, and that no disorder be allowed in Westminster Hall, or in the passages leading to this House, during the Sitting of Parliament, and that there be no annoyance therein or thereabouts; and that the Serjeant at Arms attending this House do communicate this Order to the Commissioner aforesaid.

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

Ordered,

That the Votes and Proceedings of this House be printed, being first perused by Mr. Speaker; and that he do appoint the printing thereof; and that no person but such as he shall appoint do presume to print the same.

OUTLAWRIES

Bill for the more effectual preventing Clandestine Outlawries; *read the First time; to be read a Second time.*

JOURNAL

Ordered,

That the Journal of this House, from the end of the last Session to the end of the present Session, with an index thereto, be printed.

Ordered,

That the said Journal and Index be printed by the appointment and under the direction of Sir Kenneth Anthony Bradshaw, KCB, the Clerk of this House.

Ordered,

That the said Journal and Index be printed by such person as shall be licensed by Mr. Speaker, and that no other person do presume to print the same.

CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

Ordered,

That Mr. Harold Walker be Chairman of Ways and Means and that Sir Paul Dean be First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.—[Mr. Wakeham.]

Imprisonment of a Member

Mr. Speaker: I have to inform the House that I have received a letter dated 16 June 1987 from the Clerk of Petty sessions, in Enniskillen, in the following terms:

"At Enniskillen Magistrates Court on Monday 15 June 1987, Mr. Kenneth Maginnis MP appeared in answer to a Summons charging him with failing to tax his car."

The letter goes on to set out the offence in detail and concludes as follows:

"A warrant of commitment was issued forthwith committing him to prison for a period of 7 days. I understand Mr. Maginnis was lodged in prison later on the same day."

I shall cause the text of the letter to be printed in the *Official Report*.

[Mr. Speaker]

Following is the text:

"At Enniskillen Magistrates Court on Monday 15 June 1987, Mr. Kenneth Maginnis MP appeared in answer to a Summons charging him with failing to tax his car. Details of the offence are as follows:—

Whereas a complaint has been made before me that on the 10th day of January 1987 on the public road at Anne Street, Enniskillen in the said District and County Court Division, he did use a mechanically propelled vehicle, registration mark IUI 7516 for which a licence under the Vehicles (Excise) Act (NI) 1972 was not in force, Contrary to Section 8(1) of the said Act, whereby he is on conviction liable to a fine not exceeding the greater of the following, namely £400 or five times the amount of duty chargeable in respect of the said vehicle.

AND WHEREAS he is further liable under Section 9(1) of the said Act to pay an amount equivalent to all arrears of duty owed by you and calculated as amounting to £25.00 from the 1st day of November 1986 to the 31st day of January 1987.

Mr. Maginnis indicated to the Court that he did not require time to pay.

A warrant of commitment was issued forthwith committing him to prison for a period of 7 days.

I understand Mr. Maginnis was lodged in prison later on the same day."

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that this is an appropriate opportunity to raise with you the way in which you intend to select amendments for the Queen's Speech debate, in particular the selection of amendments from minority parties to provide an opportunity for a Division on the major issue facing the House, which is whether the Government have a mandate from the people of Scotland and Wales for their policies.

Mr. Speaker: So far, I have received no amendments in respect of the debate on the Queen's Speech. The matter that the hon. Gentleman raises is therefore academic at present, but I shall, of course, consider amendments very carefully at the appropriate time.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the selection of amendments, will due consideration be given to amendments to be submitted to the Table Office this afternoon by my colleagues in Plaid Cymru and myself in view of the fact that they raise this issue and enable Members from Scotland and Wales to show their dissatisfaction with the results of the election and with the Government's policies?

Mr. Speaker: It is good to see the hon. Lady back with us. She will know from the past that all amendments are very carefully considered.

Queen's Speech

Mr. Speaker: I have to acquaint the House that this House has this day attended Her Majesty in the House of Peers, and that Her Majesty was pleased to make a Most Gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament, of which I have, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy.

I shall direct that the terms of the Gracious Speech be printed at the appropriate place in the Votes and Proceedings. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:—

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I look forward with great pleasure to receiving His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco, and His Excellency President Cossiga of Italy on State visits this year. I also look forward to being present on the occasion of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Canada in October and to visiting Australia in connection with the bicentenary next year.

My Government will stand fully by their obligations to the NATO Alliance. They will sustain Britain's contribution to Western defence by modernising the independent nuclear deterrent through the introduction of the Trident submarine programme and by increasing the effectiveness of the nation's conventional forces.

My Government will strive for balanced and verifiable measures of arms control. They strongly support the United States' proposals for the elimination of intermediate range nuclear missiles, and 50 per cent. reductions in American and Soviet strategic nuclear weapons. They will strive for a worldwide ban on chemical weapons. They will seek balanced reductions leading to lower levels of conventional forces throughout Europe and the elimination of disparities which threaten Western security.

My Government will work for greater trust and confidence between East and West and for progress, especially on human rights, at the Vienna Review Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

My Government will play a leading role in the development of the European Community while safeguarding Britain's essential national interests. They will work for reform of the common agricultural policy. They will press for strict controls on Community spending and the opening of the market in financial and other services. They will work with our European partners to defend our trading interests and to press for freer trade among all nations.

My Government will sustain the fight against international terrorism and trafficking in drugs. They will stand by their pledges to the people of the Falkland Islands, while seeking more normal relations with Argentina. They will fulfil their responsibilities to the people of Hong Kong and will continue to co-operate with the Chinese Government to carry out the Sino-British Joint Declaration. They will play their full part in the United Nations and the Commonwealth. They will seek peaceful and lasting solutions to the most difficult international problems, including those of the middle east and southern Africa. They will work for the restoration of an independent and non-aligned Afghanistan.

My Government will maintain their substantial aid programme. They will pursue proposals for international action on debt to help some of the poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Members of the House of Commons

Estimates for the public service will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

My Government will continue to pursue policies of sound financial management designed further to reduce inflation and to promote enterprise and increased employment. They will maintain firm control of public expenditure so that it continues to fall as a proportion of national income and permits further reductions in the burden of taxation. Legislation will be brought forward shortly to implement the tax changes proposed in the last Budget but not yet enacted.

My Government will consult the Manpower Services Commission with a view to providing a comprehensive employment service for unemployed people. There will be guaranteed places on the youth training scheme for school leavers under 18 who do not go into employment. Legislation will be introduced to enable benefit to be withheld from those who refuse a place.

My Government will take action to raise standards throughout education and to extend parental choice. Legislation will be introduced to provide for a national curriculum for schools, delegation of school budgets and greater autonomy for schools. It will also reform the structure of education in inner London, give greater independence to polytechnics and certain other colleges and support the establishment of city technology colleges.

Measures will be brought before you to effect a major reform of housing legislation in England and Wales.

In all these policies, my Government will have special regard to the needs of inner cities. Action will be taken to encourage investment and to increase enterprise and employment in those areas.

A Bill will be introduced to abolish domestic rates in England and Wales and to make new arrangements for the finance of local government.

Measures will be introduced to promote further competition in the provision of local authorities' services.

Legislation will be introduced to enable the water and sewerage functions of the water authorities in England and Wales to be privatised.

My Government remain determined to tackle the problems of crime. They will carry out their plans to increase the resources available to the police, and will establish a national organisation to promote crime prevention. A Bill will be introduced to improve the working of criminal justice.

A Bill will be introduced to reinforce the system of firm but fair immigration control.

Legislation will be introduced to give greater flexibility in licensing hours.

Legislation will be introduced to improve the rights of individual members with respect to their trade unions and to provide further protection against trade union enforcement of closed shops.

A Bill will be introduced to reform the law of copyright and intellectual property.

My Government will maintain and improve the health and social services and will complete the introduction of the reformed social security system.

My Government will continue to support farming. They will help farmers to diversify, and will introduce legislation to encourage the planting of farm woodlands.

Legislation will be introduced to improve the provision of rented housing in Scotland. Measures will be introduced to strengthen schools councils in Scotland and to improve the management of Scottish education.

In Northern Ireland, my Government will seek an agreed basis on which greater responsibility can be devolved to representatives of the people. They will work unremittingly for the defeat of terrorism. They will build upon the constructive relations established with the Republic of Ireland in security and other matters.

Measures will be introduced to assist the merchant shipping industry.

My Government will bring forward legislation to improve the arrangements for legal aid.

Other measures will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

Debate on the Address

[FIRST DAY]

Mr. Speaker: Before I call those hon. Members who are to propose and second the motion on the Loyal Address, it may be for the convenience of the House if I announce the subjects which I understand are suggested for the various debates: Friday 26 June, foreign affairs; Monday 29 June, social and economic divisions of the nations and regions of Britain; Tuesday 30 June, deprivation and inequality of opportunity; Wednesday 1 July, Britain's cities, local services and education; Thursday 2 July, the use of national resources.

2.38 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I beg to move,

That an humble address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

The Gracious Speech refers to Her Majesty's proposed visits to Canada and Australia in the coming Session, and I know that it would be the wish of the whole House that I place on record our appreciation of Her Majesty's tireless devotion to the interests of her subjects in this country and throughout the Commonwealth. We wish Her Majesty God speed on her journey⁸ and a safe return.

In moving this Loyal Address, may I be the first in this Parliament to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on her achievement in securing a third consecutive term of office, a feat unequalled since the days of Lord Liverpool in 1820. On that occasion, moving the Loyal Address, Sir Edward Knatchbull spoke of the "respect and confidence" in which our nation was held by foreign nations. It gave him great satisfaction that the estimates for the public service had been formed on the "strictest principles of economy" and that, in regard to defence, "whatever opinions might be entertained on this subject, he was sure that the House would agree to give the support to Government which the safety of the country required". I know that those are sentiments dear to my right hon. Friend's heart and to that of the House as a whole.

I draw the attention of those self-important television pundits who have recently been pontificating and who have suggested that my right hon. Friend might lay down her burden during this Parliament to the fact that, at the time of the next election, in about 1991, my right hon. Friend will be the same age as Mr. Churchill was when he formed his first Administration. While not wishing to depress the Leader of the Opposition, I am sure that he will be aware that even as we enter the next millenium, my right hon. Friend will still be two years younger than Mr. Churchill when he formed his second Administration.

I am deeply conscious of the honour conferred upon my constituents and upon me in being asked to propose this Loyal Address. I must confess so some amazement that this distinction should fall on me. In casting back through the speeches of those who passed this way before me, a clear pattern emerges — at least in the case of the seconders of the motion. There is little doubt that they, like

my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), were young men of promise who were destined for high office. Unfortunately, the future of those who had the honour to move the motion seems to have been somewhat less assured.

I am the third generation of my family to have the good fortune to represent an industrial Lancashire seat, and I am proud to wear today the red rose of Lancashire, which precedes by several centuries its more recent usurpation for political purposes. I am privileged to have had the opportunity of representing my Greater Manchester constituency in this House for the past 17 years.

My constituency is an industrial and residential area on the west side of Manchester straddling the river Mersey and bounded on its north side by the Manchester ship canal. The present-day prosperity of my constituency and of the city of Manchester is based to a large degree on the vision of one man — Marshall Stevens who, 100 years ago this year, embarked on the incredible enterprise of linking Manchester, which is 35 miles inland, with the oceans of the world. It is an awesome sight to see 15,000-tonne ocean-going vessels gliding along the ship canal amid fields of cabbages.

The foundation of Trafford Park — the first and greatest purpose-built industrial estate in the world — was a direct consequence of that vision. The only project that can be compared with it in modern times is the building of the Channel tunnel. Although it was my wife's great-grandfather, Emile d'Erlanger, who founded the original Channel Tunnel Company in 1886, I regret to say that it was my great-grandfather, Lord Randolph Churchill, who two years later was instrumental in defeating the Channel Tunnel Bill. Although the Bill was supported by Mr. Gladstone and by many prominent members of the Liberal and Conservative parties, he managed to kill that Bill with ridicule, pouring scorn upon the provision to install in a Minister's office a button connected to demolition charges at the entrance to the tunnel which could blow it up in an emergency. He questioned who would have the right to push the button, and suggested, mischievously, that the then Member for the City of Westminster, Mr. W. H. Smith, would no doubt be proposing the motion,

"That the button be now pushed."

By such stratagems, the tunnel was delayed for 100 years, but I am delighted to see that it is well under way today.

Trafford Park became the gateway to Europe for many American firms, and in 1911 it was selected by Henry Ford as the site for his first manufacturing plant outside the United States. During the second world war, no fewer than 80,000 people worked in Trafford Park, which became famous for the production of the Lancaster bomber. Since those stern but glorious days, the decline in employment in Trafford Park under successive Governments has been relentless — above all, in consequence of changing technologies.

Today, Britain is experiencing a painful change brought about by what I would call the third industrial revolution in which the production worker is displaced by robots and computers. It is no accident that Scotland, Wales and the north of England — Britain's industrial heartland — have suffered disproportionately in job losses.

No amount of wishful thinking could bring back those labour-intensive production processes. The only answer is to embrace the new technologies, with the aim of becoming world beaters in that area, as we were in the past. Many

of our industries are as modern as any in the world. The northern edition of the *Daily Telegraph*, which used to be printed in the centre of Manchester with a work force of 2,500 using old technology, is now printed in my constituency with a work force of only 425. The House will wish to know that, during a recent visit, I was advised that none of the 425 employees deigns to take a salary as modest as that of a Member of this House.

The key ingredient in the prosperity of Trafford Park, which still employ 25,000 people, is the skill, ingenuity and reliability of the work force. The same holds true for Manchester as a whole, which, excepting only our capital city, stands second to none in the United Kingdom and is today on the up and up. Two years ago, the Government removed many of the artificial restraints on the natural expansion of Manchester airport. As a result, my constituents can fly to twice as many destinations, and we have direct links across the Atlantic as well as to the middle and far east. Manchester has the fastest-growing airport in Europe, with traffic increasing at 16 per cent. a year. That is leading to a resurgence in economic confidence, which is beginning to spread to other parts of the north west. The trend in unemployment is firmly downward, with 35,000 more people in work than a year ago.

As the representative of an urban and industrial constituency, I welcome the Government's wide-ranging plans, contained in the Gracious Speech and covering housing, education and employment, for regenerating the inner cities. My constituents will be delighted at the assurances contained in the Gracious Speech that, in all these policies, the

"Government will have special regard to the needs of inner cities" and that

"Action will be taken to encourage investment and to increase enterprise and employment in those areas."

The problems of industrial decline and urban decay cannot be solved by throwing money about mindlessly. Enough of that is already happening up and down the country, with spendthrift local councils squandering millions of pounds of ratepayers' money at the expense of the jobs that are provided by firms in the inner-city areas, which are driven out of business. A new partnership is needed between central and local government on the one hand, and private enterprise on the other to regenerate the inner cities and provide industry and commerce with new life-blood.

The newly-established Trafford Park Urban Development Corporation is the vanguard of that new partnership. There, the commitment of £160 million—*[Interruption.]*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman. I hope that in this Parliament we shall give Members a fair hearing. The hon. Gentleman should be heard in silence.

Mr. Churchill: The commitment of £160 million of taxpayers' money is expected to generate 10 times that amount from private enterprise and lead to the creation of some 16,000 new jobs in Trafford Park in the years ahead.

Any policy for bringing prosperity and hope back to the inner cities must include measures to protect our people in the inner cities from the violence that strikes fear into their hearts, especially of those who are frail and elderly. It is essential that they should be enabled to go about their

lawful occasions in safety and feel secure in their homes. My constituents will wholeheartedly endorse the Government's determination to increase the resources that are available to the police and to establish a national organisation to promote crime prevention. The police are doing a wonderful job in difficult circumstances and are entitled to the gratitude of us all, especially those of us in this House.

Whichever constituency we have the honour to represent, I venture to suggest that there is nothing that takes higher priority in the eyes of those whom we represent than the defence of the realm. Without peace and freedom everything else, over which we meet together in the House to deliberate, becomes irrelevant. The nation as a whole attaches the greatest importance to the assurance that has first place in the Gracious Speech, namely, that the Government:

"will stand fully by their obligations to the NATO Alliance. They will sustain Britain's contribution to Western defence by modernising the independent nuclear deterrent through the introduction of the Trident submarine programme and by increasing the effectiveness of the nation's conventional forces."

In the nuclear age, those countries that do not possess nuclear weapons or do not have the privilege of belonging to a large and powerful nuclear-backed Alliance, as we do in NATO, are pygmies in defence terms, and are powerless to protect their civilian population from the threat of nuclear attack or blackmail. Even as we move forward in the negotiations between East and West for the reduction of nuclear weapons at intermediate and strategic levels, it is essential to our national security that the United Kingdom maintains the effectiveness of its own systems.

The British people are finding a new self-confidence and Britain is acquiring a new respect in the world. The programme set out in the Gracious Speech underlines the Government's determination to roll forward the frontiers of prosperity to all quarters of our country so that we can truly build one nation.

2.53 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I beg to second the motion.

I am greatly honoured to be chosen to second the motion. However, the real honour is to the historic name of Sherwood and my constituency, which I am proud to represent for a second term.

When I was asked to speak this afternoon, I wondered why I had been chosen. On researching my personal profile, I found that the answer was not there. I was described by some as tall, slim and handsome—sorry, I tell a lie: tall, slim and slightly bald on top—interested in sports, having Victorian values and being a parliamentary orator with the charm and grace of a pneumatic drill. On this important occasion I have left my drill at home.

I have a second reason for pride—I have had the best of both worlds. I was born a Scot and then had the good fortune to live in Nottinghamshire for 26 years. I can recall just a few short years ago when I first entered the House and found my way to the Strangers' Bar. *[Laughter.]* I came into contact with a person who may be known to some right hon. and hon. Members as Mr. Mick McGahey. "Hello Mick," I said, as I would address any fellow Scot, "I'm Andy Stewart and I represent the largest mining constituency in Britain." Mick shook my

[Mr. Andy Stewart]

hand with comradely fervour. "Aye, it's guid tae ken ye, Andy," said he. "Now the bad news, Mick." I said. "I am a Tory." I leave the rest to the imagination of the House.

It is my privilege to follow my eloquent hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and I congratulate him on his speech. His grandfather was the inspiration and leader of this country's fight to preserve democracy and freedom. Recent events in my constituency prove that the will to fight to preserve a system of democracy through the ballot box still burns in Nottinghamshire. Indeed, the courage and determination of the Nottinghamshire coalfield communities will go down in history. But Sherwood has always had strong historical roots, like its major oak in the heart of Sherwood forest which in turn mirrors the stout heart of England.

The Sherwood constituency, unlike its old name, has existed only since 1983 and is made up of one large town, Hucknall, and a series of tightly knit villages, all individual, but linked by one important thread. They are committed, caring communities. Sherwood's collieries are world famous, and Thoresby colliery is our black diamond. Last year Nottinghamshire produced 18.5 million tonnes of coal, and sales injected £750 million into the national and local economy. The pace-setting Nottinghamshire miners' productivity record is now almost equalled by the other coalfields. This remarkable achievement has stabilised energy costs and plays a vital role in the country's fight to kill the evils of inflation—a fight which I am pleased to see will not diminish.

That other great supplier of energy, British Petroleum has its land-based production and exploration headquarters at Eakring. It is where the familiar nodding donkeys were first installed. If it had been necessary, our Eakring oil would have been sufficient to fuel our fighter aircraft for my hon. Friend's grandfather during the Battle of Britain. The House may also be glad to know that the expression "nodding donkeys" did not originate in this Chamber.

But Sherwood does not merely mean coal and oil. Our agriculture provides food. Without Sherwood there would be no Walker's crisps. Our textiles provide clothes. Jaeger exports as far as Japan. Our industries provide transport. Rolls-Royce powers aircraft all over the world. Our tourist industry provides entertainment. The unique £32 million Centre Parcs holiday village will open on Saturday, and 400 permanent jobs have been created, not counting the spin-offs for the community. Tourism is the largest potential job creator in this country and the Government's initiatives are widely welcomed.

Robin Hood is not, however, the only famous son of Sherwood. Lord Byron's ancestral home, Newstead Abbey, lies in the constituency. In 1812, after Lord Byron's maiden speech in the other place, Sir Francis Burdett said:

"It is the best speech by a Lord since Lord knows when."

Education is rightly an important feature of the Gracious Speech. The Government intend to give parents the right to make sure that opportunities are available for their children. It is impossible to take advantage of the opportunities offered if children have not received the basic skills to enable them to do so. The Bill will give our children those skills. It is not a privilege that we offer; it is their right. The Conservative Government intend to ensure that right.

Robin Hood would have been merry indeed to hear the tax proposals in the Gracious Speech. He was the original Conservative who devised the system of giving money back to the people. Our methods are slightly different, but the result is the same.

Need I say that I welcome the Government's commitment to support agriculture to enable farmers to diversify. Some of us have already diversified. The constituency has 6,500 hectares of conifers, and I applaud the initiative on deciduous trees set out in the Gracious Speech.

I was also delighted to hear of the proposals for step-by-step progress towards further trade union reforms. The plans to give the union member freedom of choice against the closed shop will go some way towards redressing the balance of power and influence from union bosses to individuals. That power will be given to householders and parents—power to the people—and that is where it belongs.

I pay tribute to the Prime Minister and to her Cabinet and ministerial colleagues for the remarkable transformation that has taken place in this country's economic fortunes and international standing since 1979. Because of this strength of leadership, I am confident about the plans that the Government will follow in the next Parliament, as outlined in the Gracious Speech.

Nationally, the country recorded the largest number of votes for the Conservative party since the war, and I know that the country has put its trust in us. With the country's permission, we shall provide a thrust forward for the British people in the exciting technological world of today and tomorrow.

3.3 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I congratulate the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) on his speech, when he moved the motion on the Loyal Address in characteristically sparkling style. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) on the way in which he performed the difficult task of seconding that motion.

The hon. Member for Davyhulme has had a chequered parliamentary career, on and off the Front Bench and in and out of the executive committee of the 1922 Committee. He is a man of many dare-devil deeds, not the least of which was to be caught speeding at Talybont, Ceredigion, by probably the only policeman on the mid-Wales roads that day—and he was probably on a push bike.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman's greatest disappointment during all the time since he came to the House on the same day as me back in 1970 was the failure to his *Obscene Publications* (Protection of Children, etc.) (Amendment) Bill in April last year. All that bloodiness and sweatiness, and it ended in tears after great striving by the hon. Gentleman. Then, after all that, the hon. Gentleman had the galling experience of coming sixth again in last November's ballot for private Members' Bills. Not that the hon. Gentleman knew about it. I read that he had not even put his name into the ballot. Some impish spirit, some parliamentary Puck, had been and gone and done it for him without telling him. I do not know what the Orders are on that or who could get up to such mischief, but all I can say is, "It was not I."

However, I have had other encounters with the hon. Gentleman. One that I recall most clearly was at the Oxford Union about 15 years ago when we debated

against each other on industrial relations. A speaker from the floor made the allegation that the hon. Gentleman's grandfather, when Home Secretary, had sent the troops against the striking miners of Tonypandy in 1910. I do not exaggerate when I say that the hon. Member for Davyholme was incandescent. He was outraged. He leapt to his feet in great heat, and with clarion words stilled the whole house. "That is a lie," said he, and complete silence fell upon the Oxford Union. Clearly, we were witnessing history being made. The hon. Gentleman announced to the hushed house, "My grandfather did not send the troops to Tonypandy. Under his orders, they detained" — I remember the words well "at Swindon." There was a gasp of awe around the chamber of the Oxford Union. The hon. Gentleman followed that with the unforgettable words, "My grandfather did not send troops. He sent only 100 mounted police and 200 unmounted police." [Laughter.] There was a similar reaction in the Oxford Union. The rest of the story was somewhat lost.

The War Office and the Home Office minutes of the time record that Mr. Churchill and Secretary of State for War Haldane both stopped the troops, and then a few days later Mr. Churchill, as Home Secretary, did send them in — the 18th Hussars. They played football against the strikers. As a matter of interest, the score was 2-1 to the troops. But that is all history. As everyone is probably happier with his own version, it probably means that matters are best left at that. The hon. Member for Davyholme may recall his grandfather's version of events. I recall my grandfather's version of events. He was on his way to Tonypandy, but unfortunately he was stopped at Pontypridd.

Much has changed in Tonypandy over the intervening years. There are no miners there. They have been wiped out. Much else has changed in Tonypandy in those intervening years — the people there now have their very own viscount.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It is Andy Pandey.

Mr. Kinnock: It is always a pleasure to have one of the flower-pot men with me.

When I think of Tonypandy having its very own viscount, I know what upward mobility really means.

The subject of upward mobility brings me to the hon. Member for Sherwood, seconder to the Loyal Address. The hon. Gentleman has a prodigious record of rebellion. He has been a dissident on increased parental contributions to student grants, on Stansted, on fluoridation, on nuclear waste dumping, on the proposed sell-off of BL and on much else. With that record of rebellion, he finds himself today seconding the Loyal Address. I think of his record over the past four years and I look at the hon. Gentleman and say to myself, "This man, with this dexterity and insider knowledge of rebellion, has the makings of a Whip." We shall see about that. We congratulate both hon. Gentlemen on the way in which they moved the motion on the Loyal Address today.

The first Queen's Speech of any Parliament is interesting, not only for the programme that it sets out, but for the people who will be pursuing that programme. Of course, there have been several changes in the Cabinet that has that task in this Parliament. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), the former Leader of the House, has been sacked — an act that deprived the Cabinet of its last surviving vertebrate. He has now gone.

Others, such as the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), have new jobs. Rumour has it that when the right hon. Gentleman went to No. 10 to speak to the Prime Minister, she said, "I want you to take responsibility for Wales". He said, "But Prime Minister, I have done Agriculture, Fisheries and Food already" — thus betraying the extensive knowledge that he has of the Principality. That appointment proved two things about the Prime Minister. First, contrary to what some of her critics say, she really has a sense of humour. Secondly, it shows that she has total contempt for Wales.

There are, of course, rising stars among the other Cabinet members — people such as the Secretary of State for Social Services, the right hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore), who is your neighbour in Croydon, Mr. Speaker. He has come to be known as an arch privatiser. I remember him — I suspect that you do, too, Mr. Speaker — in an earlier phase of his development when he was a veritable evangelist of Heathism. It is sad to see such a shift of loyalties. Since he is such a decent fellow, perhaps he is most charitably thought of as a good man fallen among ambitions.

The Home Secretary, meanwhile, is charged with a different task. He is apparently on a special detachment, making appeals to the leader of the SDP. I almost feel sorry for the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen): Tory seduction to the right of him, democratic fusion to the left of him, and complete confusion everywhere else around him. I am sure that he will find a way out of it. He usually does. That is his habit.

Meanwhile, all those Ministers, together with others, have power in Government. The question is how they will use that power in Government. Will it be used, as the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North recommended, with "circumspection", or will it be used ruthlessly to increase the theft of powers from local democracy? Will it be used contemptuously to ignore the overwhelming votes and indisputable views of the people of Scotland? Will it be used sensitively to unify, or savagely to deprive and to divide? All the signs are that this Government, like the one before it, will use power malevolently — to de-control rents and leave private tenants to the mercies of unscrupulous landlords; to conscript youngsters into training schemes regardless of the utility or suitability of those schemes; to break up the Inner London education authority, and break it up in a way that the Secretary of State himself said only a few years ago, in a distinguished report on the subject, would result in "a rump of poorer, deprived boroughs and an increase in administrative costs".

That was when the Secretary of State was the soggiest of wets. Now he has given himself completely over to the dessicated tendency in the Tory party. He is prepared to conduct half-baked experiments on our children that he would never inflict on his own children. He will conduct experiments in centralisation and in Government control. He will conduct experiments in so-called open enrolment and opting out, and in budget management by head teachers that has flopped wherever it has been rehearsed. Most of all, the Secretary of State will end free schooling and start charging for what in his prejudice and ignorance he calls "extras".

That is the Government's way — to ensure that education, health care and so many other essentials of opportunity and security, are rationed by charges. They will make the offer of provision to everyone and then say

[Mr. Kinnock]

that if one wants it, one will have to pay for it. Today they say, "Pay for field trips, music, sport, cookery and art"—so-called extras in the curriculum; tomorrow they will say, "To Pay for books"—indeed, they are doing it already; and the day after they will say, "Pay for teachers." Any hon. Members who deny that do not even comprehend the proposals that stumbled out from the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State in the course of the election campaign.

This Government know the price of everything and the value of absolutely nothing. Not content with charging for health care or education, they will, with their poll tax, make people pay to vote. That is what the poll tax means. Apart from the fact that millions will be unable to pay the tax or will have immense difficulty in paying it because of their poverty, that there will be extra costs for business in many parts of the country, that there will be a massive increase in bureaucracy and the bills that go with that and that there will be a great increase in centralisation by a Government who always say that they want to roll back the state but always roll on the state over anything that stands in their way, the poll tax will mean that the people of this democracy of Britain will have to pay for their vote. If the poll tax is introduced in England and Wales, it will mean that, as in Scotland, inclusion on a register of voters will mean liability for poll tax. If a citizen registers for the one, he registers for the other. If one votes, one pays. The only way not to pay is to surrender one's right to vote under the poll tax system.

In all of this the Government turn the basic democratic rule of no taxation without representation on its head. With the poll tax, they are saying: no representation without taxation. The vote in the British democracy is to cost an average £205 per adult per year if the Government have their way with the poll tax. The Government know that very well. Their own White Paper in 1984 said that the poll tax can be,

"seen as a tax on the right to vote".

They know what they are doing and still they are going ahead with making the exercise of democratic rights in this country conditional on registration to pay a tax. The Government know it very well. That is only one among the many reasons that have always existed for Governments in this country of every colour and for Governments in so many other democracies rejecting the poll tax.

In the United States, whose tax system the Prime Minister is said to admire very much, the 24th amendment to the constitution lays down that no poll tax should be allowed

"to deny or abridge the right of citizens to vote".

That amendment was resisted by only one group in the whole of the United States during the early 1960s—the clique that controlled the state of Mississippi. Here in 1987, in the state of Missis Thatcher, we have a Government who are insisting on imposing a poll tax and everything that goes with it—abridging the right to vote in a way that is forbidden under the constitution of our sister democracy and should be forbidden by any decent Government in this democratic country.

Even with all that, the Prime Minister still tells us that she wants more power to the people. She cannot want that and a poll tax, for the two are incompatible. Indeed, the Prime Minister does not appear to want a free society as we understand it. She appears to want a fee-paying society.

Those who support her, those who support payment for schooling, those who support payment for health care and those who support the decontrolling of rents, the privatisation of water and the conscription of the young unemployed should ask themselves one question: why was every single one of those ideas jettisoned 40, 50, 60 or 70 years ago by Liberal Governments, Labour Governments and by Conservative Governments, too? Indeed, many of the Acts abandoning the brutal and miserable system that this Government wants to reintroduce were instigated by previous Conservative Governments whose memory this Government disgrace.

The reason for the abandonment of private water, the sale of health care, payment for education, rent decontrol and so much else of the trappings of misery was summed up by Winston Churchill. They were abandoned because, "they brought the vultures of utter ruin to the dwellings of the nation".

A consensus gradually and deliberately grew to get rid of what the present Government want to exhume and restore as the code for living and government in this democracy.

Of course, the Government will claim that their measures, some of which I have just listed, will not bring back the wretchedness or the division of which Winston Churchill spoke in 1945. They will insist that all that they propose are means of modifying and modernising in the name of what they call independence and choice.

But independence for whom? Independence for the tenant who must pay a decontrolled rent? Independence for the youngsters who must accept whatever training they are given, on pain of destitution? [Interruption.] Conservative Members may laugh, but in the 1930s the men of my family had to take exactly the same kind of punishment. They were taken from the north, from south Wales and from Scotland and they were told that unless they went to forced labour in training camps they would lose their dole. Those people, who had their freedom wrenched from them for months of their youth, were expected five years later to fight and win for freedom. That is why I say that the present Government are a disgrace to the past of even their own party. Even their party learnt the lessons of those days.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Walking backwards to Christmas.

Mr. Kinnock: No. The Conservative party is exhuming the dead past. We are trying to keep it in the past; they are trying to make a tomorrow of all those yesterdays.

Are we getting independence for the householder who must buy water from a private monopoly? Are we getting independence for the pensioners and others who will be hit by further cuts in housing benefit? Where is the independence in all that?

Where is the choice? Where is the choice for the parents who are compelled to pay for the schooling of their children or take the risk that their education will be sacrificed? That is not choice; it is forced charges. What about the choice for the children who are told by the Government, "You can go to school for free, but if you want education in that school you will have to see that your parents pay"? What a choice! How can the Government have the gall to say to those children that this is a free country and that we have a free education system but that children's chances in that system and their future opportunities will depend on the ability and willingness of

their parents to pay for what the Secretary of State calls the extras? The right hon. Gentleman knows that those "extras" are vital to a decent, modern education.

Where is the choice in a system that requires people to beg or borrow the price of an operation or to wait interminably in pain? Where is the choice for the widow whose entitlement to state earnings-related pension has been cut in half by the Government? Where is the choice in all that? It is obvious that under this Government independence is a mockery and that such choice is a taunt for those who do not have the money to buy education and health care, the opportunity and the essential services, at the time, on the day and in the place that they need them.

In every part of the Government's programme there are counterfeit offers of advance in choice and independence. The Government's inner city proposals are a prime example. They spent years taking over £2 billion in rate support grant away from the poorest areas and the poorest cities in our land. Now they say in the Queen's Speech that they will pay special regard to the needs of those self-same areas. We know that that special regard will not mean the restitution of rate support grant or the funding of housing programmes. It will mean the turning of those areas into colonies of capital-intensive business and prohibitively-priced accommodation. That is what they have been and what they will continue to be. They will be exclusive in the most literal sense of the word, because they will include only those who can meet the prodigious costs and will exclude those who cannot make the down payments or the repayments. They will exclude local democracy and the interests of the surrounding communities.

We can wish the urban development corporations the very best of luck. We can hope that they will be new centres of employment, but, as we do, we know that continually over the past seven years the Government have cut the rate support grant. They have chopped housing support by 60 per cent., reduced industrial development aid and abolished investment allowances. They do not have the desire or the will to commit the means necessary to deal with the corrosion of life in the inner cities and in many other areas of devastation. *[Interruption.]* I see that the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) is making his annual visit.

It is for all those reasons that the Government inevitably decrease opportunities, increase poverty, multiply division and diminish democracy. They inevitably want to put an entry charge on all the doors of learning and care and opportunity, the doors that people need to pass through if individual freedom is not just to be a fine and noble phrase but a real chance of living.

The Prime Minister marked her election victory a fortnight ago by quoting Rudyard Kipling. She spoke of the need to govern with

"An humble and a contrite heart."

For a definition of the Government's attitude towards the people she would have done better to read wider and to have read,

"Pass the hat for your credit's sake, and pay-pay-pay!"

The maxim of modern Conservatism is that if one cannot pay, one should stay away; if one cannot afford the fee, one cannot be really free. That system was buried by history and need and by the decent consensus of all parties decades ago. It will be buried again.

3.29 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): It is my first and pleasant duty to join the Leader of the Opposition in congratulating my hon. Friends the Members for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) on the most excellent, witty and stylistic way in which they proposed and seconded the motion on the Loyal Address and the great eloquence and research that they both brought to their task.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme knows well the problems of bringing modern technological industries into the older industrial areas. He was instrumental in trying to get an urban development corporation for Trafford Park, some of which falls in his constituency, because he wants to bring to that area—**[AN HON. MEMBER: "Trafford Park is outside his constituency."]** Very well—some of which falls close to his constituency. My hon. Friend wants to bring to that area some of the good work that has already been apparent in the urban development corporation in Docklands and on Merseyside.

My hon. Friend also dealt with Britain's role in the world and the need for strong defence, and for us to be a reliable ally in NATO, which is vital to our defence policy. Less well known is his work for health in the community, because he is—

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

The Prime Minister: I would like to get on a little.

Mr. Heffer rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the Prime Minister is giving way.

The Prime Minister: May I at least finish congratulating my hon. Friends and get on to some of the political content of my speech?

Less well known is my hon. Friend's work for health in the community. He happens to be a pilot and has voluntarily, frequently at very short notice, put himself on duty to fetch pharmaceuticals urgently needed for hospitals and orders for spare-part surgery. We thank him for that work, which is much less well known than it should be.

My hon. Friend follows his family's great tradition in serving this House. I pay tribute to his work today and to all that he has done for us on his own account.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood on his excellent and witty speech, and on his tremendous victory two weeks ago. We remember the firm stand that he took against intimidation and on the right to go to work during the coal strike, and this won him the support of local miners and of the overwhelming majority of people in the country. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very unseemly for hon. Members to shout. If the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) remains silent, he may have a chance later to speak at greater length. He should not intervene from a sedentary position.

The Prime Minister: I listened carefully to what the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said. He seemed long on words but short on content and I began to understand why he lost the general election in such a decisive way. He seemed to address many of his remarks

[The Prime Minister]

to some of the shibboleths of the 1930s. Those have no appeal whatsoever to the population of our country, which is becoming home-owning, share-owning, and savings-owning and having an independence it would never otherwise have got. Those class shibboleths have no relevance to our modern society. People know full well that they have a higher standard of living than they have ever had before, stemming from a Government who, in a partnership with the people, have brought about economic strength and a standard of health care and social security that we have never had before.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle) rose—

The Prime Minister: I will give way now that I am on the political part of my speech.

Mr. Roberts: Will the right hon. Lady explain why house prices are falling dramatically on Merseyside, while rising steeply in London, and why this is especially so in Sefton, the lowest rated metropolitan district in the country, with a 20-year record of Conservative control? Has it anything to do with unemployment?

The Prime Minister: I hope that one day Merseyside will welcome the private sector within Liverpool and thereby confirm the comments of Mr. Kilroy-Silk, who very perceptively said:

"In fact, the Militants and their ilk in Liverpool are the biggest deterrents to job creation on Merseyside that there have ever been."

Mr. Heffer: The right hon. Lady will know that I happened to meet her at lunch time today at a certain reception. I asked her whether she would come to Liverpool and see for herself what the local authority in that area has done, to see the houses and sports centres that have been built and all the work that is necessary. I asked whether she would then perhaps change her mind about what local authorities under Labour control have been doing for the people in areas such as Liverpool.

The Prime Minister: I was not aware that we were able to refer to such matters in this debate. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I shall be visiting a number of inner city areas. However, I was referring to the comments made by Mr. Kilroy-Silk about what had brought Liverpool low.

Mr. Heffer: Mr. Kilroy-Silk is a past figure.

The Prime Minister: I hope that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) will give me the chance to finish the quotation. Mr. Kilroy-Silk said:

"Dozens of times in the last few years I have tried fruitlessly to persuade companies that I knew were looking for sites for new plants to locate on Merseyside and in Knowsley, but each time the decision went against us, because of their perception of our Militancy."

If we want more jobs on Merseyside, Labour-controlled local authorities will have to welcome private enterprise within their borders.

At the heart of the Gracious Speech is the section referring to the economy, and at the heart of Britain's economic strength are the continuing policies of sound financial management. They are designed to reduce inflation further, to keep firm control of public expenditure, and to increase enterprise and employment by incentives and training. It takes time to establish a reputation for prudent economic policies of the kind enjoyed by Germany and Switzerland, with all the benefits

that they bring, but Britain is now succeeding. Control of inflation through sound financial policies is and will remain our top priority.

It has been the habit in the past two terms of office and will be the same habit in the next for the Government to set the financial and legal framework. However, the wealth of a country is the effort of its people and the way in which they respond to that framework. They have responded and that has brought a very high standard of living. However, effort depends upon incentives. That is frequently forgotten by those who make easy election promises, but, as the result of the last election showed, people were not taken in by those promises in any way.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: The fundamental wisdom of the truths that I have enunciated was acknowledged then. Our policies have brought record living standards and better standards of health and social services. The news since the Dissolution has confirmed the sense and soundness of our policies.

Mr. Canavan: Give way.

The Prime Minister: No, I will not give way while I am referring to this section of the Gracious Speech.

The news since the Dissolution is good news, and of course Opposition Members do not want to hear such news. There have been good balance of payments figures. Inflation is at 4 per cent.—still too high, but far less than the 7 per cent. that the Labour party says that it would be happy to start with. There is continuing growth in industrial production and national income. There have been encouraging business surveys from the Confederation of British Industry and the chambers of commerce. There are lower mortgage rates and lower gas prices, and record British Telecom profits are helping to finance a record £2 billion investment programme. In addition, the OECD forecasts that Britain this year will have the fastest growth of all the major industrial countries. That is all of the good news since the election.

Mr. Canavan rose—

The Prime Minister: Yes, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, who comes from Scotland, which, after London and the south-east, has the second highest income per head of any part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Canavan: A couple of minutes ago the Prime Minister mentioned her general election success, but her party in Scotland has been reduced to such a discredited rump that Scottish Tory Members of Parliament could not even form a football team and the Secretary of State for Scotland is like some discredited colonial governor-general who received no democratic mandate from the people whom he governs. Why is there no mention of that in the Queen's Speech? Why, in particular, is there no mention of proposals to do what the majority of people of Scotland want—the setting-up of a devolved Scottish Parliament with legislative and economic powers to help repair a lot of the damage that has been done by eight hard years of Thatcherism?

The Prime Minister: I seem to remember that the hon. Gentleman made a similar interruption in 1983. I seem to remember that I gave him a reply similar to the reply that I am going to give now.

In three out of the last five Labour Governments Conservatives had more seats in England than Labour, and we had to endure it. What is the hon. Gentleman proposing — separatism? May I point out what the Leader of the Opposition said in the House on the devolution Bill in 1977? He said:

"At this point I could pause for cheers from the SNP and Plaid Cymru . . . They know, and they must acknowledge, that their proposterous ideas of economic self-dependence, in any degree of economic separation and the consequences that go with it, would mean utter misery for the people of both Scotland and Wales." — [*Official Report*, 15 November 1977; Vol. 939, c. 469.]

Now, let me tell the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) that I have left the best good news until last. But before I come to that I should say that, in spite of our good news, we must be alert to the risks to the international economy, discussed at the Venice summit. The agreements reached there on the need for surplus and deficit countries to take action to correct their imbalances will need to be translated into action.

But the best news is the continuing fall in unemployment, confirmed by last month's figures, the largest monthly fall ever. Other than in Northern Ireland, unemployment has fallen in the last year throughout the country, fastest in Wales, the north-west, the west midlands and the north. Sustained economic growth is now creating enough jobs to reduce the number of people unemployed, even though the population of working age is increasing.

Nevertheless——

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: No, I shall carry on a little longer, otherwise I shall be speaking for too long and I do not wish to do that.

Nevertheless, Government special schemes——

Mr. Wareing *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I am on the particular point that sustained economic growth is now creating enough jobs to reduce the number of people unemployed even though the population of working age is increasing. I give way on that particular point.

Mr. Wareing: I am very interested and pleased when there is any real reduction in unemployment, but can the Prime Minister tell the House when the unemployment figure will be down to what it was on 3 May 1979?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, when we came into power in 1979 the hidden unemployment, the restrictive practices and the failure of the then Labour Government to deal with such things left us with a problem. Perhaps he will read the passage in Lord Donoughue's book about that. He said:

"Labour's problem was that its general commitment to industrial investment and maintaining full employment, as well as its close ties with the trade unions, made it politically difficult to cut out the bad parts of British industry, even though it was essential for its long-term efficiency and survival."

Unless we had done that there would have been far more unemployment than there is now and British industry is now efficient and doing very well. That is an interesting book and I may have time to quote rather more from it during what I have to say.

Nevertheless, Government special schemes will continue to play a very important part. There will be guaranteed places—[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Leader of the Opposition had a fair hearing; so should the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: There will be guaranteed places on the youth training scheme, which is an excellent scheme, for school leavers under the age of 18 who do not go into employment or further education.

Legislation will be introduced to enable benefit to be withheld from young people who deliberately choose to remain unemployed, and quite rightly so.

Moreover, we believe that jobcentres should be transferred from the Manpower Services Commission to the Department of Employment so that they can work more closely with unemployment benefit offices to provide a more effective service of help. We shall consult the Manpower Services Commission accordingly.

Job opportunities are growing steadily — 1,100,000 more since March 1983. Our task is to help to ensure that those who are seeking work have the right training to fill those opportunities and the help to start a business on their own if they so wish.

I refer now to something that I referred to in reply to the Leader of the Opposition. The spreading ownership of housing, shares, pensions and savings has been one of the great achievements of the past eight years. That is one reason—the bringing of independence and power to the people—why the right hon. Gentleman's party did so badly in the election. People do not want the songs and policies of collectivism. They want the capacity, ability and opportunity to own their own houses, shares, pensions and many other matters besides.

The Labour party favours what it now calls social ownership, which is nationalisation in sheep's clothing. The effect, would be to concentrate power in Whitehall and to deprive millions of ordinary people of their shareholding in industry. By contrast, we shall continue our programme of privatisation, thus freeing businesses to respond to the needs of the customer and increasing the opportunities for share ownership.

Now we have a new task. Just as we took power from trade union bosses and restored it to their members, so we must now extend to the people new freedoms and responsibilities in housing, education and local authority finance. These will be the subject of three major Bills that have been signalled in the Gracious Speech. It is our purpose to bring new opportunities into the inner cities in particular and to make town halls more accountable, for nowhere are the damaging effects of dependence and socialism seen more clearly than in some of our inner cities.

We shall abolish the domestic rates—a grossly unfair tax—and replace them with a community charge.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: Subject to proper protection for those in need, it is right that we should all pay something towards the cost of the local services from which we all benefit. The new unified business rate will protect businesses and jobs in inner cities from the councils which obstruct wealth and job creation by imposing very high rates.

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: As the House knows, in spite of those high rates, some Labour-controlled local authorities have plunged recklessly into debt. I take this opportunity to make it clear once again that the Government have never stood behind the debts of local authorities and will not do so now.

We have made great strides towards a property-owning democracy. Some 1,000,000 council houses have been sold since 1979, and two-thirds of our people now own their own homes.

Mr. Maxton rose—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Members for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) know that the Prime Minister is not giving way. They must not persist.

The Prime Minister: We will ensure that home ownership continues to spread by maintaining mortgage tax relief and the tenants' right to buy.

If one wishes to examine the Labour Government's attitude to housing and how they resisted any attempt to bring increased freedom to people to purchase their houses or to increase freedom in other ways, one has only to look at Lord Donoughue's account of the Labour Government's years in power. On page 104 of his book he says:

"Labour's housing policy was dominated by dogma and the vested interests of a minority of activists whose power was based on the local authority building departments and who were out of touch with and apparently completely unconcerned with the wishes of British families."

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

The Prime Minister: No. I have given way a great deal and I must get on.

Our new task must be to extend the benefits of greater choice and independence to those in rented accommodation. Rent controls have reduced the private sector to a mere 8 per cent. of the housing market, with the result that there is almost a municipal monopoly in rented housing. Too many tenants are confined to large monolithic and sometimes badly kept council estates. It is high time for town hall monopoly to be replaced by individual choice in renting. We shall therefore introduce major housing reforms in this Session.

First, we shall give council tenants—where they are dissatisfied with their landlords—the right to transfer to other approved landlords, such as tenant co-operatives and housing associations. Secondly, urban development corporations have been successful in restoring derelict industrial areas, and we believe that a similar approach could be adopted for housing in some places. We will therefore take powers to create housing action trusts—initially on a pilot basis—to take over and renovate areas of council housing in especially bad repair.

But wider choice in housing also requires a revival of the private rented sector. For new lettings—I repeat, new lettings—we will therefore bring forward a series of proposals to reduce rent controls which have so greatly restricted the supply of homes for rent. Half a million private sector properties now lie empty, and our proposals will help to bring those back on to the market.

Mr. Skinner rose—

The Prime Minister: In all these measures existing tenants will keep their present protection in respect of rents

and security of tenure, and we will strengthen the law against harassment. All these policies have been set out in the most detailed manifesto ever placed before the British people. That manifesto said what we would do, unlike the Labour party's manifesto, which tried to conceal what it would do.

A home should be a source of pride to the family living in it, regardless of whether it is owned or rented. Greater choice and independence will help to make it so. I again contrast our whole policy on housing—which has brought more ownership, opportunity and choice to people—with the policy of the Labour party. Lord Donoughue also said:

"The left wing of the Labour party began to mobilise hostility to what they saw as a threat to their local authority power bases. Although they themselves personally often enjoyed the pleasures and benefits of living in their own private Hampstead homes, they were dogmatically committed to denying those pleasures and benefits to council tenants." We have given them to those tenants and will continue to do so.

Mr. Skinner rose—

The Prime Minister: No.

The reform of education is the third of the fundamental reforms to be introduced this Session. Although in many of our local authorities children are receiving an excellent education, in others there is widespread dissatisfaction. In too many schools education does not match either what the parents want or what the children need. In this first Session of the new Parliament we shall bring forward a major Bill which will introduce a national curriculum with clear attainment targets and tests during the period of compulsory schooling; which will prevent local education authorities from putting artificial limits on numbers, so making it possible for popular schools to take in more pupils; which will enable maintained schools to opt out of local authority control where parents and governing bodies so wish and to be funded directly from the Department of Education and Science. The right hon. Member for Islwyn knew that when he made his mischievous statement from the Dispatch Box. He knows that no fees will be payable to those schools that opt out.

The Bill will allow London boroughs to pull out of ILEA and to run their own education service, and it will give many head teachers and governing bodies within local authorities control over the budgets of their schools. Where some of the local authorities have started this they have met with great success and far better use of money.

Mr. Kinnoch: When the Prime Minister says that there will be no fees, is she saying that there will be no requirement that can be enforced by a local education authority or any school in the maintained sector that makes the provision of music, art, field trips that are essential for the curriculum, sport or any other subject on the recognised curriculum dependent upon parental contribution or the payment of any fee?

The Prime Minister: Those schools will be on the same financial basis as local education authority schools. Their fees—[Hon. Members "Ah."] I mean their finances. There will be no fees—[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. Members: Fees.

The Prime Minister: They will be on the same financial basis as the schools under local education authority

control. Their finances will come not from the local education authority but from the Department of Education and Science. There will be no fees payable by the parents. The right hon. Member for Islwyn is referring to cases that have come up from the ombudsman and are before the courts as to whether charges at schools in local education authorities are permissible for extras such as holidays overseas and music. That is a case which is now being dealt with. The schools that opt out will be on a similar basis to those of local education authorities, but their finances will come not from the local education authority but from the Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Fees.

The Prime Minister: It is no good the hon. Gentleman mouthing the word "fees". There will be no fees payable.

Mr. Kinnoch: Can the Prime Minister tell us whether she will ensure that the legislation required to permit schools to opt out will prohibit the charging of fees as a condition of entry? Can what she describes as "extras" be made subject to charges? I am familiar with the Hereford case and other cases in which the courts have held that it is illegal to charge for those subjects recognised to be part of the curriculum. Is the right hon. Lady proposing that that law should be changed so that schools can charge fees for what she loosely describes as "extras"?

The Prime Minister: Those cases have gone to the ombudsman and are now going through the courts. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science issued a statement about that yesterday and is consulting upon the result of those cases. The right hon. Gentleman will have masses of opportunities to discuss this matter when the Bill comes before the House. It will be a very considerable Bill.

Parents want schools that will provide their children with the knowledge, training and character—

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Unless the Prime Minister gives way, right hon. and hon. Gentlemen must resume their seats.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear it.

Mr. Faulds: I am grateful, Sir. It is the first point of order of the new Parliament, and it is a very good and genuine one. Will you ensure, Sir, that tomorrow, when *Hansard* is scrutinised, it contains an exact report of what the Prime Minister has actually said this afternoon?

Mr. Speaker: *Hansard* always does that.

The Prime Minister: I shall be grateful because it will make it clear that no fees will be payable for schools.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman when I have finished this paragraph.

Parents want schools that will provide their children with the knowledge, training and character to fit them for today's world. They want them to be taught basic educational skills.

We shall enlarge the right of parents to choose those schools that will best meet the needs of their children. The legislation sets out to achieve the most far-reaching reform of education since the Education Act 1944.

Dr. Owen: Will the Prime Minister state the selection procedures for those schools? Will they follow the same non-selective procedures that are applied by local authorities, or will headmasters of such schools be able to choose? That is the crucial question governing whether we return to selective education.

The Prime Minister: If a school opts out, it will do so in the character that it has within the local education authority system. When schools are especially popular, as several are now, they must choose. They do not choose on the basis of the 11-plus. In practice they have their own well-known methods of choice. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, voluntary maintained schools can make their own choices. Therefore, the system will not be different. If a governing body wishes a school to change its character, it will have to make a fresh application to the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: May I press on with my speech?

People's right to choice and independence must be safeguarded in other directions too.

Since 1979 we have transformed industrial relations by strengthening the rights of trade union members. In the coming Session we shall take that a stage further by ensuring that all members of trade union governing bodies are elected by secret postal ballot at least once every five years; by limiting further the abuse of the closed shop; by protecting individual members if they refuse to join a strike they disagree with; and by establishing a new trade union commissioner with the power to help individual trade union members to enforce their fundamental rights. I believe that these steps, like those before them, will be widely welcomed by members of trade unions throughout the country.

The Gracious Speech identifies 17 other Bills that will be brought before Parliament during the present Session. Overall, the Government's legislative programme is one of the most substantial and radical in recent years.

Mr. Maxton *rose*—

The Prime Minister: However, I shall not deal with all of those matters now because I wish to say a few words on defence.

The Gracious Speech sets out the Government's determination to keep Britain's defences strong and to work for reductions in the overall numbers of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Maxton *rose*—

The Prime Minister: We shall update our independent nuclear deterrent with Trident and ensure that our forces are equipped with the most modern conventional weapons.

Britain has taken a lead in shaping the West's position in negotiations on intermediate and shorter-range—

Mr. Maxton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman wishes to ask why the Prime Minister did not give way. I cannot help the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Maxton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As a Scottish Member, I have no idea whether any of the Bills to which the right hon. Lady has referred will cover Scotland. So far, except in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), she has made no reference to any legislation for Scotland because she knows that she cannot introduce any legislation for Scotland because she has not got the—

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman and the House will give the Prime Minister an opportunity, she will, no doubt, deal with such matters.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: That is the issue on which, during my intervention, I was trying to ascertain from the Prime Minister whether the education legislation would apply in Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister deals with such matters.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) is aware, education in Scotland is rather different from education in England. There is reference in the Gracious Speech to a Bill to deal with education in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman is aware of that. If he is saying that, because there are more Labour Members in Scotland than there are Conservative Members, we cannot legislate there, I point out to him that in that case many previous Labour Governments had no right to legislate for England, and that much of their legislation would be absolutely not legal. That is absurd. We are the United Kingdom, and I hope that we shall remain a United Kingdom.

Mr. Maxton rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would be for the convenience of the House if the Prime Minister could now get on with her speech. That would leave plenty of time for Back-Bench right hon and hon. Members to make their own contributions and to ask their own questions which will be answered later in the debate.

The Prime Minister: There must be many constituencies in Scotland that are glad that Labour's defence policy is not being carried through.

Mr. Maxton rose—

The Prime Minister: Britain has taken a lead in shaping the West's position in the negotiations on intermediate and shorter-range nuclear missiles in Europe. *[Interruption.]* It is my belief that an agreement consistent with NATO's security can be reached by the end of this year.

Opposition Members have not learnt the simple lesson that a strong defence policy and a successful arms control policy are directly linked. *[Interruption.]* I realise that the hon. Gentleman would like me to carry on speaking and I am flattered. However, I should like to keep my speech as short as possible.

I recall the words of the former Prime Minister, Sir James Callaghan, speaking in this House last March on the deployment of—

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon) rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister is not giving way. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Wigley: She should give way.

The Prime Minister: I recall the words of the former Prime Minister, Sir James Callaghan, speaking in this House last March on the deployment of cruise and Pershing when he said:

"I have no doubt that our expressed determination to go ahead . . . brought him"—

Mr. Gorbachev—

"back to the negotiating table. That is a lesson for people to learn now."—*[Official Report, 9 March 1987; Vol. 112, c. 53.]*

However, Sir James's voice and those of many others going back to Hugh Gaitskell are no longer heard in today's Labour party. The unilateralists and the surrender squads have taken over. The views which were once held only by extremists are now the official policy of the Opposition. However, the British people have rejected totally the Opposition's defence policy.

Today, at the beginning of our third term, Britain's voice is heard with respect in Europe, in the Soviet Union and in the United States because we have made Britain strong again and because we have put freedom first.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No. I am nearly at the end and I shall not give way again.

Indeed, trust in the people is at the heart of our policies. That is how we have, in the past eight years, transformed the climate for business, brought over-mighty trade unions within the rule of law and created a new confidence at home and abroad. That is why we were returned with such an excellent majority. The achievements of the past two terms of Conservative government show that that trust was well placed. Trust in the people will continue to be the foundation for the achievements for our third term.

4.8 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I join happily with the other leaders in congratulating the mover and the seconder of the Loyal Address. The hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) was in characteristically ebullient form, and the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) is a Scotsman and a Conservative Member of Parliament, which is an increasingly unusual combination, and, because of it, he should be congratulated on his great foresight in moving to Nottingham 20 years ago. I must admit that I did not recognise his comparisons between the policies of Robin Hood and those of the present Administration. My impression is that the Government's social policies are designed to rob the facilities of the poor to make life more comfortable for the rich.

At the start of this Parliament it would be right for Opposition Leaders to acknowledge the undeniably considerable political achievement of the Government in being returned to office and the personal achievement of the Prime Minister in being the first political leader this century to be returned three times to power. I readily acknowledge that, but the policies put forward in the Gracious Speech must be judged against what we expect the country to look like at the end of this Parliament as we turn into the decade of the 1990s. If we judge the contents of the Gracious Speech against that yardstick, we discover that it is a programme which will do nothing to heal the growing social, economic and now political divisions in our country.

First, I shall deal with the foreign affairs section. I object strongly to the recurrent elements of newspeak where fine words are used to convey the opposite of what the Government propose. I shall give the House three examples. The Gracious Speech states:

"My Government will play a leading role in the development of the European Community."

That means, "My Government will continue to look ridiculous and damage our industrial prospects by dragging our feet over entry to full participation in the European monetary system." The Gracious Speech says that the Government will support proposals for reductions in nuclear weapons and will modernise the nuclear deterrent. That means, "My Government will unilaterally increase Britain's nuclear capability eightfold over a period when the rest of the world is striving to achieve balanced reductions in nuclear terror." The most cynical sentence reads:

"My Government will maintain their substantial aid programme."

That should read, "Under my Government we have moved further away from the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent. of GNP. It was 0.5 per cent. when my Government took office in 1979 and it is now down to 0.33 per cent. In spite of the marvellous public response to Live Aid and other efforts, we have no intention of matching private generosity with official generosity." That would be a more accurate rendering of the Government's aid programme.

On domestic matters there is one surprising omission both from the Queen's Speech and from the Prime Minister's address and that is the topic of AIDS. Whether we like it or not, this dread disease will have implications for the health, social and economic strains of this country into the 1990s. We in the House have as a whole underestimated the need to mobilise research and information and the means of controlling the disease. It has become a matter of controversy in the United States and I hope that it will not become a matter of party controversy in this House. Therefore, I wish to make a constructive suggestion to the Government and I hope that the Prime Minister will not reject it simply because it has a Liberal precedent. The Government of 1906-14 established a committee on imperial defence which included not only the Government, but members of Opposition parties, their advisers, civil servants and professionals. That sort of committee should be established to deal with this difficult question which will become increasingly difficult as we move through the life of this Parliament. I hope that the Government will respond positively to that proposal.

The domestic legislative programme fails to address the serious problems facing the country and, instead, we are offered a series of comparatively irrelevant measures. I start with the poll tax. The Prime Minister called it a poll tax before the election and there is no reason to deny that that is what it is. However, last year when we were facing the legislation in Scotland I observed that enthusiasm for it among Conservative Members varied in direct proportion to the distance of their constituencies from Scotland. That is even more true after the disastrous showing of the Conservative party in elections in Scotland and after the slaughter that it suffered. The truth is that no reputable body of local or financial opinion in Scotland supported the proposal.

There are no imaginative proposals for reforming the government of Scotland; there is no mention of the

industrial regeneration that is required north of the border; and still less is there any mention of democratic decentralisation of government from Westminster to Edinburgh, which is clearly endorsed by the overwhelming majority of Scottish representatives in this House.

We are offered a further round of trade union bashing. It may be that some minor adjustments to trade union legislation are still required, but if the Prime Minister is not careful they could endanger the legitimacy of balloting and the validity of majority decisions in trade unions. That must be avoided. If we are seriously seeking legislation which will improve industrial relations, why is there a complete absence of proposals to develop a greater sense of industrial partnership? That is what we should concentrate on.

The Gracious Speech includes the sentence:

"A Bill will be introduced to reinforce the system of firm but fair immigration control."

That has an ominous ring to it. There is little primary immigration and our treatment of families of ethnic minorities already here, especially of visiting relatives, is a national and international disgrace. In December the Home Affairs Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration produced a report containing the important sentence:

"It is not adequate for the Government to deplore racial hatred but to accept no responsibility in respect of situations which foment it."

That was a wise sentence and we should concentrate on the need to tackle the real problems of housing and employment among our ethnic minorities and not pander to the racist fantasies of the Tory party conference.

There was a notable interview of Mr. James Prior shortly after the election on Channel 4 News which deserves wider circulation. He was asked,

"But how has the Conservative party itself changed in the past eight years?"

He replied,

"compared with former years it has undoubtedly moved to the right. It is a tougher, more radical right party than it was under Macmillan and Butler and Ted Heath. And I think for that reason it is a less pleasant party."

The sentence in the Queen's Speech certainly endorses that observation.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman would now like to make it clear whether his party's policy would be to allow an unlimited number of polygamous wives to enter the country where the primary immigration has already taken place or whether he would be in favour of doing something to prevent an unlimited number of polygamous wives from entering the country? He can make that clear right now.

Mr. Steel: If that is what the right hon. Gentleman is worried about and is what lies behind the sentence in the Gracious Speech, I can tell him, as he must know perfectly well, that he is dealing with tiny numbers. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I do not deny that there may be a problem with those families, but we must take into account the children of those marriages who are already here and the different habits of different religions. It is quite wrong that a sentence of that generality should be included in the Queen's Speech. If that is what the right hon. Gentleman is talking about, it is a tiny problem compared with the overall problem of good race relations, which is what I am talking about.

Mr. Tebbit rose—

Mr. Steel: I shall not give way again.

A further irrelevant and rather mean proposal is that to remove benefit from those who do not accept placement on youth training scheme courses. If we had a comprehensive system of training for 16 to 19-year-olds that was properly funded, a case could be made out for that. But to say that the present YTS must be translated from being a voluntary training effort into a compulsory measure for those who have no employment is to take the wrong step.

An even more irrelevant measure is the proposal to privatise our sewerage system. I can think of nothing that will assist our economy less than that. Certainly, if it results in the creation of yet another private monopoly, such as British Telecom, I cannot see that it will produce any improvement in the nation's economy.

To look forward to the picture that Britain may present at the end of this Parliament, we certainly see more people with shares—there is nothing wrong with that—and more people with more money in their pocket—there is nothing particularly wrong with that. But when the Gracious Speech states that the Government

"will maintain firm control of public expenditure so that it continues to fall as a proportion of national income and permits further reductions in the burden of taxation",

we can see that this forecasts a further decline in the standards of public service, health, education and housing.

Of course, none of us wants more taxation, but to say that taxation is the most important objective, as illustrated in the Gracious Speech, means that, as a consequence, much of the legislation is designed to enable people who have the resources and the initiative to escape from the inadequacies of public service—to escape the inadequacies of education, health and housing. I believe that the Government should concentrate on demonstrating that the social market economy can be used to show that capitalism can be made to work not just for capitalists, but for all the people.

David Lloyd George talked about creating a land fit for heroes to live in, but this Government are creating a land fit for people to make money in. The national profligacy with oil revenues is now matched by private profligacy on a large scale. Consumer credit and consumer debt have risen from £9 billion when the Government took office to £31 billion last year. The credit boom is having the direct effect of sucking in yet more imports.

I believe that if the Government's programme was truly radical it would address the real needs of the country. It would include the widespread introduction of industrial partnership. It would include the real reform of the tax and benefit system into a single structure. It would include machinery for decentralised decision-making, especially economic decision-making, and restore power to local government instead of taking it away. I ask the Government a straight question—why do they continue to resist the most obvious reform of local government, the introduction of proportional representation? That system would ensure that no one was able to grab control and run local authorities dogmatically unless able to secure a majority of popular support. Why do the Government persist in resisting that proposal? There can be only one reason—they fear the thin-end-of-the-wedge argument. There is no rational case for resisting electoral reform and giving local authorities back to their citizens. That is what the Government ought to be determined to do.

After the election we welcomed the Government's fine words, repeated in the Gracious Speech, about concentrating on the needs of the inner cities. However, the first utterances on this subject from the Prime Minister and the chairman of the Conservative party gave the impression that they were more concerned about the political impact of their failure regarding inner-city policies. It is true that there are now no Conservative Members in the great cities of the north—Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, Aberdeen, Dundee, Newcastle, Leicester and Hull. We do not want to see injected into the cities yuppy areas that are designed to tilt the political balance. If that is what is proposed, it is no use. If the run-down city areas are not to become the permanent sink of the affluent society, whose victims live shut away from the gaze of the prosperous suburbs and the shires, except when they explode in resentment, what is needed is help and enablement.

Inner cities need co-operative housing schemes, and the physical environment must be improved. Local residents must be given hope and pride in their surroundings. As mentioned by the Prime Minister, this may take the form of tenant associations and housing co-operatives. However, such programmes need public and private money working together and not the continued bypassing of local democracy. Local enterprise is needed to generate jobs for local people. That will not happen without a systematic fostering of a local grass-roots partnership between central and local government, between banks and local businesses.

Business in the community and the local enterprise movement and its agencies have helped to show the way, but above all they need local leadership. It is in this sphere that the Government are most grievously at fault. The Government are taking over when they should be helping local people to take charge of their destinies.

At the time of Lord Woolton the Conservative party castigated the Labour party for putting the man in Whitehall in charge, but what are the Government doing across a whole range of policies except putting the man in Whitehall in charge? With education, the Secretary of State, the man in Whitehall, is now proposing to run schools himself. In local government, the Secretary of State for the Environment—no doubt, he prefers to be known as the gentleman of Whitehall—proposes to run local government himself. Lord Young, the peer in Whitehall, proposes to sort out the inner cities.

The sustained attack that has been made on the autonomy and independence of local government is rapidly becoming a constitutional crisis. The Government should have a care because strong local government is essential for strong democracy. I find the mania for centralisation and for stifling plurality in our common lives deeply disturbing. The universities are to become more and more dependent upon contracts. People appointed to public boards, the BBC or to the church must be sure to be "one of us". Even a body such as the Highlands and Islands Development Board does not contain one member who represents the politics of that area. That practice is increasingly true of the health boards and health authorities throughout the country.

I believe that the Government should stop asking the question, "Is he or she one of us?" but start asking, "Is he or she any good?" Is he or she a representative of local

opinion?" If those questions are not asked we shall drift towards what the former Leader of the House unhappily referred to before the election as "the arrogance of power."

At the last election, the Government secured 42 per cent. of the popular vote, which represented 32 per cent. of the electorate. The Government must have a duty and a regard for the other 58 per cent. and not just their supporters. However, the whole tone of the Gracious Speech suggests that they do not yet recognise that duty. I predict that if that persists to be the Government's policy, we shall see a continued decline and division of our country under what is becoming an increasingly narrow Administration.

4.25 pm

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): First, I should like to join in congratulating my hon. Friends the Members for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) on their admirable, apt and witty speeches. I should also like to give a warm welcome to the Gracious Speech which amounts to a radical programme of reforms. Anybody who heard that speech would instantly recognise that there is no question of a loss of momentum on the part of the Government. The Government are firmly in command of the political agenda. What is more important is that the Gracious Speech showed that the Government's programme is not just opportunistic, but is based upon clear principles. The bedrock is a sound financial policy and upon that is built an imaginative programme of popular capitalism and increased choice. There is choice for council tenants, choice for parents and choice for trade unionists.

The strictures made by the leader of the Liberal party are wholly misconceived. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) criticised the aspirations for reducing the share of the national cake taken in public expenditure, but that criticism is profoundly misconceived. The progress that the Government made in reducing that share enabled them to increase spending this year on the things that the right hon. Gentleman wants money to be spent on—education and the National Health Service—and at the same time the Government were able to reduce taxation and the level of borrowing by bringing down interest rates. It is through sound financial policies that it is possible to combine those objectives.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale is not correct in castigating the Government for taking things over. If he had listened attentively to the programme regarding the powers of council tenants vis-à-vis their estates, the powers of parents and the powers of trade unionists, he would have discovered that what is proposed is giving power to the people, not arrogating it to the Government. The right hon. Gentleman's slipshod way of misrepresenting what the Government have said is best shown by his reference to the Government running the schools themselves. It is perfectly clear that that is now what is being proposed.

Everything that is proposed in the Gracious Speech is in line with the manifesto on which the Conservative party was elected. If the doctrine of mandate applies, there is certainly more than an adequate mandate for this programme as a result of the outcome of the general election. But an election is not just an occasion for politicians to seek to persuade the electorate or to gain power. It is also a unique opportunity for politicians to

listen to the people and, if necessary, to adjust both their policies and their tone accordingly. The result of the election was, of course, an unprecedented triumph, for which I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brittan: No, not for the moment.

The process none the less highlighted some deep-seated problems. What came to the surface was not new, but an election always amounts to a grand assize of the nation. It certainly highlighted some of the problems of which we were already clearly aware.

Mr. Dalyell rose—

Mr. Brittan: I think that I am coming to the point on which the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene. Perhaps he will allow me to deal with it in my own time.

I am glad that the strongest message coming from the electorate has led to an immediate response from the Government in their concentration on the problems of the inner cities. But if we are focusing on the divisions between the more and less prosperous parts of the country, it would be wrong to believe that the problem of the inner cities is the whole problem. Nor is it a question of a crude divide between the north and the south. As we know, there are areas of great prosperity in the north and areas with considerable difficulties in the south and the midlands. The division, rather, is between areas that have been heavily dependent on industries in decline and the rest of the country. That division has a regional dimension, as most of the declining industries are in the north.

None the less, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, economic advance is proceeding even in the more disadvantaged areas. No way is that more clearly demonstrated than in the recently announced fall in the unemployment figures. The north-east, for example, now has many signs of hope, but equally it is apparent that the south is advancing much faster. The more benign economic climate that now exists everywhere should not blind us to the fact that what may be glorious summer in the home counties amounts to no more than a long-delayed spring in Consett or Halifax.

Mr. Dalyell rose—

Mr. Brittan: I am coming to the hon. Gentleman's point, if he will bear with me.

That is well appreciated by the Government. After all, as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, I told the Conservative party conference at Blackpool in October 1985 that the vast gulf between different parts of the country represented the gravest social and economic problem facing us as a nation. That remains my view. In crude political terms, we could probably ignore the problem. Political opportunists would point out that with more seats being won, not just retained, in the south, we could govern securely without tackling those problems. But I am confident that we shall do no such thing, for to do so would be an abdication of responsibility and, as Conservatives, we are deeply conscious of our duty as stewards of the welfare of the whole nation.

What should we be doing to bridge that gulf? Much has already been done or announced. The announcement of the introduction of urban development corporations has already brought hope for Teesside.

[Mr. Brittan]

Expenditure of £150 million is designed to attract in its wake some £500 million of private money. In the manifesto, mini-development corporations are proposed, and there is the introduction of city technology colleges, which will do for the human resources what the urban development corporations will do for the bricks and mortar.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brittan: I shall not, because I am coming to Scotland later. I imagine that the hon. Gentleman wishes to refer to it.

The other initiatives that the Government have in mind are represented, for example, by the work on the task force. It is important that that work should continue and be given priority, and that the extra work should be done by local labour. I am sure that efforts will be made to ensure that that is what happens.

However, in my view, a wider regional approach than that is still necessary. The problem of the north-east, for example, is not just an inner city problem. Many small industrial towns and villages, which could not be regarded as inner cities, still suffer considerable deprivation because of the decline of the traditional industries. That is recognised in the support that the Government have given to the new Northern Development Company. I wish it well, but I am anxious about its capacity to do the whole job that it faces. As it proceeds on its way, I hope that the Government will not lose sight of the possibility of converting it into a full-scale development agency of the type that exists in Scotland and Wales and of creating such agencies in other parts of England.

In addition, the time has come to have another look at the dispersal of Government Departments and agencies from London and the south-east. Since the most recent round of dispersal, information technology and communications more generally have advanced greatly. It may be possible to move agencies out of London and the south-east now when that was not possible or practicable even five or 10 years ago.

Other measures on the so-called supply side are necessary. I am glad to see the Government's moves towards regionally varied pay, with the public sector in the lead. But the other side of that coin, which could make regionally varied pay much more acceptable, is a regionally varied tax or national insurance contribution structure. The combination of lower pay, but lower tax, would be a powerful stimulant to employment in the regions. It would be a well-targeted and effective use of public money and influence, making economic sense and being entirely in line with the Government's general philosophy.

What is essential is not any particular measure, or even any set of measures, but giving sufficient priority to those problems throughout the operations of the Government. In the speech at Blackpool to which I referred, I said:

"In making all our economic and industrial decisions we should always ask ourselves: what impact will this decision have on that gulf between the different parts of the country?" That factor cannot always be the decisive factor, but the question must always be asked. The question arises in the most diverse areas of policy making. In working out the

community charge scheme, for example, the question was asked. As a result, the benefit to industry in the north of the new universal business rate will be considerable.

If we are concerned about the policies needed to reinforce the unity of the whole country, what happened in the election in Scotland must give Conservatives the greatest cause for anxiety. It is clear that the problem there is political, not primarily economic. The economic situation in Scotland, as my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, in his speech two days ago, have shown, is better than in some other regions where we did not suffer so badly during the election. Nobody could say that Scotland has not received its fair share of public money. I believe that the shock of our radical approach, our confident espousal of popular capitalism, has had to battle against the instinctive reliance on the public sector that has built up in Scotland in more depth and over a longer period than in any other part of the country. We simply had an inadequate basis of understanding and sympathy with what we were doing. In addition, there was a Scottish national element going well beyond the supporters of the Scottish National party which we ignore at our peril.

There is an urgent need to respond to those messages from the electorate. That does not mean that we should abandon the substance of our radicalism, nor succumb to the temptation of constitutional changes that look infinitely more attractive as a vague idea than when examined in rigorous detail, but it means recognising that a tone of voice or a set of assumptions that may strike a responsive chord in Reading or Ruislip may jar disastrously in Edinburgh or Aberdeen.

Mr. Dalyell: With the right hon. and learned Gentleman's knowledge of the north and his obvious concern about Scotland, going back to the devolution argument, why does he think the Prime Minister has not honoured her hope in the resignation correspondence that he would return to high office soon and resume his ministerial career?

Mr. Brittan: That does not have the slightest thing to do with the subject that we are debating.

I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is conducting far-reaching discussions and a critical examination of what went wrong in the election in Scotland. We cannot expect an instant solution, but we, south of the border, must in due course be ready to respond with sensitivity and understanding to any practicable proposals that emerge, destined to assuage the ill-founded but dangerous feeling of being left out of the mainstream, which, sadly, seems to abound in Scotland today. It is that type of response to all our problems that will give reality to our sincere and oft-repeated desire to maintain the unity of the United Kingdom and promote and enhance the concept of one nation. It is such a response that I commend to the House.

4.39 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I wish to pay tribute to Joan Maynard who, for 13 years, represented the people of the constituency that I am here to serve, and the people of Sheffield, to the best of her ability. On 12 June, I was the only Opposition Member who could genuinely say that he was looking on the bright side.

I congratulate the mover and seconder of the motion — the hon. Members for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). I remind the hon. Member for Davyhulme, who talks about high-rated local authorities and eulogises about the sort of solutions that the Government are proposing for other parts of the country, that until last year the district council in whose area his constituency lies was controlled by the Conservative party. I remind the hon. Member for Sherwood that Robin Hood was born in Locksley in Sheffield, and, like the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), I recall that Robin Hood took from the rich to give to the poor, and not the other way round. From Sheffield, we shall continue to advocate that as hard as we can.

It is not surprising that the issue of what sort of democracy we are and the nature of our local government is a primary part of the Government's programme. The Prime Minister has spelt out on many occasions that it is her intention to sweep Socialism from the face of Britain. This afternoon she has reminded us that she has nothing but disdain for collectivism. Like the trade unions, local government has stood in the way of the restructuring of our economic and social life; instead of the democracy of the ballot box at all levels, the democracy of the bank balance and of the privilege that comes with wealth and property will be how our democracy operates in a Conservative Britain.

In other words, we shall be taking a step back 100 years to the time when people fought to ensure that democracy was based on citizenship and not on the property that people owned. Talk of a property or share or capital-owning democracy is an insult to the people of Sheffield, Brightside, who, day in and day out, look not at where they can put their money on the Stock Exchange or in the best possible share dealing but at where they can put their money to ensure that their children have food on the table and clothes on their backs. Any family or parent would expect to ensure that the money that they wish to earn will keep their families well looked after.

The words that the Prime Minister used this afternoon about decreasing dependence are hollow to those whose dependence on the state has been increased by mass unemployment, by the increased poverty that goes with it and by the ever increasing dependence on state benefits that they experience. If we want to lift people out of dependence on a central state, we need to ensure that they can earn their living and that they have the dignity and status that go with using their skills. They must earn their money, not make money by speculating on the Stock Exchange or selling property that they may have acquired at a knock-down price from a give-away Conservative Government. They must be able to earn it by hard work in our factories, offices, shops and communities, by providing services and producing goods, and making sure that we have wealth for the future.

The people of Brightside do not want to hear talk of pricing themselves into jobs. Lower wages mean increased dependence on benefits for those who are in work. The number of those who receive housing benefit as rents are pushed up and their earnings go down has dramatically increased—it has doubled during the eight years of the present Government.

In that spirit, we need to examine a different future. This afternoon we heard a dangerous and disturbing comment from the Prime Minister about the security of

local government finance. I hope that she will withdraw that remark at some point, because the interest rates for all local authority borrowing and the well-being of local government finance as a whole are not served by statements such as that made by the Prime Minister. That applies to Conservative, alliance or Labour-controlled local governments.

We have, I hope, a pluralistic democracy that is based not solely on the ownership of wealth or the votes that put us in this House, but on being able to make decisions across the country for the well-being of our communities. The cultural, political, social and economic diversity of the country must be respected if we are not to have the elective dictatorship of which Lord Hailsham spoke some years ago. We must not have a single solution imposed on every part of our country, or a position in which the zealots and missionaries from down south believe that they have the answers for Scotland, Wales and the inner cities of the north.

Some of us are working together. Industry, commerce, business, trade unions, higher education and research institutions are working with local government to come up with solutions of their own. We do not want the solutions imposed through urban development corporations, for which public money is readily available as long as it is directed from the centre and is in the hands of those who wish to offer our communities as hosts to those who want to come in and make for themselves, rather than to stimulate and support the community.

I wonder whether the intentions of the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) or of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry reflect what the Government intend to do. Is it to be the colonisation of Scotland, the north and Wales, or the self-help programmes for the inner cities? There is a considerable difference. Sheffield alone has lost almost exactly the same amount of money in local government grant and subsidies as has been pumped in public money into the London docklands. I challenge the Prime Minister to give the city of Sheffield the money about which she spoke, in terms of the urban development corporations that were mentioned by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), to use for the benefit of local people through the democracy that has existed for generations, rather than to impose her solutions from outside. Working together, we can use enterprise and initiative to rebuild our communities. Until eight years ago our people had jobs. They had pride in the crafts and skills that they used in steel and engineering. I was appalled to hear those industries described today by the Prime Minister as the bad parts of our industry. They were the industries on which our wealth was created and on which many people in this part of the country were happy to live for generations. We want the opportunity to do that all over again. We expect even this Government to respect those differences and that diversity.

If we are to have the opportunity to extend and develop democracy, we must stop the vilification and undermining of confidence in local democracy, as the leader of the Liberal party said earlier. If we remove the safety valve that allows people to determine what will happen in their communities for themselves, if we remove the opportunity for people to be helped to change the nature of their lives, we pose a dangerous threat to democracy itself. If people cannot find an outlet for their frustration, and if the symptoms of the present decay of inner city areas are not

[Mr. David Blunkett]

allowed a democratic outlet, the Government will inevitably be forced into even greater authoritarianism in order to suppress those symptoms and overcome the frustrations and difficulties that people in such areas will be displaying.

I appeal to the Prime Minister to take account of all that. Democracy is not a slogan about whether people own capital or shares; it is something that belongs to us, which our grandparents fought to achieve. The ballot box, in local as well as in national elections, is an important part of the pluralistic democracy of which we have been so proud.

I hope that we will also ensure that public money is made available for our people and not simply for those who are willing to come from abroad to exploit our country. We do not need the Japanese and Americans, and we certainly do not need to invest in golf courses or in mansions to provide for them. We want leisure facilities and decent housing for our people, because that is their birthright.

If the Government are to invest public money in inner city areas through housing action trusts, as described this afternoon, why are the Government not prepared to provide the same resources to those local authorities that are willing to work with their tenants to ensure that together they are able to repair the desperate housing stock currently existing in many of our major areas? Why is the money that is being made available to the London Docklands Development Corporation not being made available to local government? Is it that the direction of the LDDC suits the Government? Two hundred-year leases without rent review are being given to speculative companies willing to put their money into the London docklands. Property is being sold at well below the market price to encourage people to make a quick buck. If that was done by the much vilified local government system, those councillors would be surcharged and disqualified for neglecting their fiduciary duties.

I say to the Government, to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who is, of course, not with us in the House, and to those who, on his behalf, listen and report back to him that we do not want solutions imposed as though we were colonies of an underdeveloped nation. We are not a separate part of the country. We want the opportunity to do things for ourselves with our people. If the Prime Minister means what she says about the need to listen and to be willing to co-operate with those who wish to regenerate their economies and communities, I hope that, respecting the cultures and the politics of those areas, she will be willing to put some of those resources and some of that commitment into areas where it is clear that the whole of the community, speaking with one voice, is unified in seeking a way forward. It is statesmanship of the first order that unites a nation and does not divide it. It is those who give people the dignity of having a job and of using their skills who will be remembered. Those of us who have to suffer the difficulty of Opposition in the years ahead will continue to ask that this country should see our democracy operate in the interests of everyone, and not just in the mission for a few.

4.53 pm

Mr. Tom Arnold (Hazel Grove): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for affording me the opportunity of

addressing the House this early in the debate on the Loyal Address. I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on his speech. It was a fighting speech. Indeed, he comes to the House with a considerable reputation in local government and in the Labour party, and also with a considerable reputation for courage. We salute him for that and I hope that he will make a considerable contribution to our debates and our discussions in the House.

I, too, propose to say something about local government and local government finance, but before doing so may I say how much I welcome the Queen's Speech and the very clear radical thrust in its proposals. It is quite obvious that we shall have a number of late sittings. I welcome that because I hope that the Government will in no way on this occasion lose the momentum that I believe we have gained from our stunning result at the general election. I was particularly pleased, therefore, to hear that in the first year there are definite proposals to go ahead with the reform of local government and local government finance. I appreciate that this is a controversial area but we have debated these issues in the Conservative party now for many years. Indeed, I remember the time when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was the Minister responsible for local government. He carried out a widespread consultation with all Back-Bench Members of Parliament but, alas, at that time there was a failure to agree and so no measures were introduced. However, the problems did not go away and, if anything, the problems of unfairness and the lack of equity increased.

I am very pleased that we have now finally reached a situation where I believe the majority of the parliamentary party will support the proposals on which we fought the general election campaign. Under our proposals the burden will be spread more evenly and more widely than has hitherto been the case and there will be a greater measure of accountability between the electorate and those who are elected to serve as local councillors. I sincerely hope that, as our debates develop, the Government will not run away from their proposals.

Earlier today I was interested and amused to have an exchange outside the Chamber with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who said that the reason that the Conservative party had done so badly in Scotland at the general election was the introduction of the community charge. The Conservative party was already facing difficulties in Scotland before its introduction—the hon. Gentleman may remember that there was uproar over the revaluation which took place. Were we not to introduce the community charge in England and in Wales and were we instead to proceed with the long delayed revaluation, I think that we would face considerable problems, which is another reason why we are right to press on with our new proposals.

Having engaged the hon. Member for Linlithgow in a discussion about community charge I could not help but have a further discussion with him about what used to be called the West Lothian question, what I suppose is now the Linlithgow question. It has already been raised in the newspapers after the general election results in Scotland. I say to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and to the Government generally that those of us who resisted the proposals to go ahead with a measure

of devolution in the 1974-79 Parliament would do so again in this Parliament were the Government to be so unwise as to travel down that road.

I read an article in *The Guardian* yesterday which sought to depict the way in which Scottish Question Time will develop. It pointed out that there may not be too many Members on the Government side of the House on those occasions. I propose, and I hope that a lot of my hon. Friends will join me, to attend Scottish Question Time in future as often as I can. I think Scottish Question Time will be absolutely fascinating. It is important that there should be no wobbling on the issue of devolution. We must make absolutely certain that we do not get ourselves into the trap of being led on to ground which will be marshy and swampy and from which there will be no escape.

The answer to the problems of the Conservatives in Scotland is not that there has been too much of what the press refers to as Thatcherism but that there has been not enough. It is necessary for my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Scottish Office to continue, with Treasury Ministers and other Ministers, to pursue policies in Scotland that will continue to bring benefits to the Scottish economy. Thus, more people in Scotland will abandon the defensive posture or attitude of believing that when there are problems and difficulties they must always turn to the state for protection rather than to the benefits that can be produced from an efficiently working capitalist economy. Markets do work and markets do clear, and the more that can be done to improve the market economy in Scotland, the better the prospects for people in Scotland will be.

When I listened to Opposition Members talking about Scotland I realised that that is only one manifestation of what the chattering classes refer to as the north-south divide. I have been a Member of Parliament for an industrial conurbation in the north of England—for Greater Manchester—for 13 years and I am bound to say that the caricatures that I read in the national press are just that. Contrary to the description that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Brightside, it simply is not true to depict our country as divided between haves and have-nots in terms of a simple geographical division between the north and the south. He knows as well as I that large parts of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire and Greater Manchester are prosperous because they have taken up the opportunities offered by the Government instead of going down the narrow mean streets of Socialist authoritarianism of the kind practised in the city of Manchester.

There are 10 Conservative Members in the 30 constituencies in the county of Greater Manchester and each one represents a prosperous community. There are three Conservative Members in the metropolitan borough of Stockport and it is no accident that Stockport's rates are well below those of the city of Manchester or that businesses are moving from the city to boroughs such as Stockport because they do not want to put up with the sort of nonsense from Socialist councillors that they are expected to put up with in Manchester.

Unless radical steps are taken to deal with the problems of the inner cities, the decline will continue. I am delighted that the Government are to go ahead with a variety of measures to take the Conservative attack into the Labour heartlands. That is a great challenge for us in this Parliament.

We made sweeping gains in the general election in a number of constituencies that the Labour party had

regarded as being its for ever. I salute in particular my new hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson), for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) and for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), who went into the Labour heartlands and won votes from people who had previously voted Labour. The victory at Battersea was not the result of yuppies moving into the area; the Conservative candidate won the hearts and minds of erstwhile Labour voters. That needs to be done in Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield, and we will do it.

I see that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), the chairman of the Conservative party, is present. He has already started to unveil some plans and I wish him well. Until there is a concerted effort to turn back the Socialist policies of our great northern cities we shall continue to have difficulties and problems.

My message to the Government is that whatever happens we must not lose momentum. We must take the opportunity that the historic general election victory has given us and press ahead with our policies and the proposals in the Queen's Speech. If we do that, we shall trounce the Labour party in the next general election and shall deserve to do so.

5.2 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold) seemed to be still fighting the general election, and doing so in a strident way which was a contrast to the tone of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett).

I join in the welcome given to the hon. Member for Brightside and thank him for his thoughtful contribution on the nature of democracy. If we had more discussion on that topic, the House would be more representative of those whom we are supposed to represent.

I wish to start by examining the nature of democracy. As we have already seen, a serious democratic issue faces the people of the countries and regions of the United Kingdom. That issue involves the Government's right to pursue the policies set out in the Queen's Speech in the regions and nations of the kingdom. That is the most fundamental question which any democracy can face and we must face it at the start of this new Parliament.

I tried to elicit from the Prime Minister, who would not give way to me, whether she intended that the policy of selling schools out of the state sector and funding them directly from the central education Departments would apply to Wales and Scotland. I should like a clear answer to that question tonight.

The Prime Minister twice mentioned the Department of Education and Science, but did not mention the Scottish Office or the Welsh Office. I therefore assume that the Government do not intend to introduce their divisive education policies in Scotland and Wales. If that is so, I shall be glad, because there is clearly no support in Scotland and Wales for the education policy or for the policy on what the Queen's Speech calls housing reform, involving the withdrawal of support, through the system of controlled tenancies, for those tenants in the private sector.

There is also no support in Wales and Scotland for other parts of the Queen's Speech, such as the emphasis on further firm control of public expenditure. There is support in Wales, Scotland and the north of England for further public expenditure. Liberal, Labour, Plaid Cymru

[Mr. D. E. Thomas]

and SNP Members regard it as their mandate to argue for additional public expenditure. It is our democratic entitlement to do that.

We see it as incumbent on the Government to respond to the demand for more public expenditure. The former Home Secretary, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), said, in the thoughtful second half of his speech, that he understood that the Government needed to respond sensitively to diversity, protest and opposition within parts of their territory. Unless the Prime Minister responds sensitively to those demands she will be the last Prime Minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in their current form. She must take that decision. It is clear that the people of Scotland, Wales and the northern region of England will see that only by demanding greater autonomy—perhaps in different ways in different areas—will they be able to ensure a response to their valid political demands.

Perhaps the most reprehensible parts of the Queen's Speech are those dealing with international affairs and defence. I wish to discuss those, but first I wish to examine the political response to the election result.

We have already seen the Prime Minister's attitude to Wales in the appointment of the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) as the Secretary of State for Wales. I am not one of the narrow nationalists who believe that English people cannot make a contribution to Welsh politics. Indeed, I should not be an hon. Member if it were not for the votes of English people who have moved into Wales and have the good sense to vote for me. My criticism is not that English people should not take part in Welsh politics. We had Mr. Keith Best as the hon. Member for Ynys Môn during a short interregnum in the politics of Anglesey. He was an assiduous constituency Member and I am sure that his successor, my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), will pay tribute to him.

The argument is not that the new Secretary of State represents Worcester and can see Wales on a good day; the argument is whether the Secretaries of State for the territorial Departments of the United Kingdom—the Northern Ireland Office is a slightly different case—should be based within the politics of those countries. That principle has never yet been breached in the Scottish Office, but it has been breached in the Welsh Office.

Welsh Tory Members are not present today. Perhaps they have disappeared from the House; they have almost disappeared from Welsh politics. Before the appointment of the right hon. Member for Worcester those hon. Members kept saying how important it was that the Secretary of State for Wales should represent a Welsh constituency. After the right hon. Gentleman's appointment those hon. Members turned down all requests to be interviewed on Welsh television because they were so embarrassed.

The appointment was a negation of Welsh democracy. The traditional role of the Secretary of State for Wales is to represent in the British Cabinet the interests of Wales as a country within Great Britain. It is not his role to represent in Wales Government policies in which he has been schooled in other Departments. Yet that is precisely the role that the right hon. Member for Worcester is bound to follow, because that has been his departmental schooling in a series of Tory Governments.

Therefore, the principle has been breached. Every previous Secretary of State but one has represented a Welsh seat. The only exception occurred in the Government of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) when the Secretary of State represented an English constituency but had previously represented a Welsh seat. In that case the person did not have a Welsh seat, but at least he had been part of Welsh politics for most of his political life. In the breaching of that principle the Government have shown contempt for the principle of democracy and, indeed, for the principle upon which the Welsh Office was founded—namely, that it was a recognition of the political integrity of Wales and that that integrity should be represented in Cabinet.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does the hon. Gentleman think it is right for hon. Members who represent Scottish and Welsh constituencies to hold office in any other part of our unitary Parliament? If he does not think that, he must tell us why.

Mr. Thomas: It is an important principle that devolved Departments should be staffed by Ministers from the relevant territories. In the case of Departments with overall United Kingdom responsibility—as, for example, in the Department of Energy, because energy is clearly a major issue in Scotland—it makes sense that a Minister in such a Department should represent Scottish interests. The same principle applies to education. Where higher education is not a devolved function, as in the case of Wales, a Minister from a Welsh constituency might have an important contribution to make to higher education in the United Kingdom as a whole.

I served for five years in the previous Parliaments with the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts. It is clearly sensible that hon. Members from all over the United Kingdom should be allowed to make a contribution. In the case of Scotland and Wales we are talking about specific Ministers with territorial responsibilities which have been devolved to those Departments by legislation. In this instance the basic principle of Welsh democracy has been breached.

The hon. Member for Hazel Grove spoke about the joy that he would get from being present during Scottish questions. Does the hon. Gentleman think that it is part of his responsibility in representing the electors of Hazel Grove to disrupt democracy in Scotland? Clearly, the role of Scottish Members is to question the territorial department of the Scottish Office, and if that process is disrupted by hon. Members representing English constituencies it will be a serious matter for the Chair. Indeed, it might well be a matter to be referred at some stage to the Committee of Privileges if we find that in the first or second lot of Scottish or Welsh questions English Members seek to disrupt the democratic will of the Scottish and Welsh people.

I am certain that the Chair has already addressed itself to the issue of the selection of Members to speak in Scottish and Welsh debates and during Welsh and Scottish questions. We expect the selection to reflect the balance of parties in those nations, not the balance of parties in this House. A similar system should apply to the selection of hon. Members to sit on Scottish and Welsh Select Committees. Those Committees should respect the political will of the electors in Scotland and Wales and

reflect the political balance in Wales and Scotland. The Scottish and Welsh Grand Committees should reflect the same balance. The Secretary of State for Wales is in a difficult position because he does not represent a Welsh constituency.

I have set out that agenda because it is an agenda for potential constitutional conflict. It reflects the reality of the election results democratically delivered by the ballot box in Wales and Scotland.

I should now like to turn from the domestic and internal divisions that are part of the Government's programme to dealing with the international disaster that the Government have launched with their even firmer than usual statement in this Queen's Speech about the deployment of Trident submarines. Throughout the countries of Britain there is no democratic majority for this escalation in the arms race unilaterally being carried out by the Government.

It is significant that in the order of priorities in the Gracious Speech deployment comes first and arms control comes second. Once again we see the multilateral myths of the Conservative party. It is concerned in the first instance with so-called modernisation of the so-called independent nuclear deterrent rather than with giving first priority to arms control. The acquisition and introduction of Trident by the Government is a serious unilateral escalation of the arms race. As we know, the Trident D5 has been designed as a weapon of greater effectiveness against hardened targets and it has a higher yield. The yield is far higher than that of the current warheads in the Chevaline programme, although that was modernised in secret by the previous Labour Government. This Government's modernisation will result in substantially greater capacity and in the acquisition by the United Kingdom of what is potentially a first-strike weapon. That is a serious escalation of the arms race and it has been undertaken by the Government. It will be part of the whole so-called NATO deterrent strategy, but in no sense can it be described as an independent deterrent because the whole of its command, control and targeting will depend on United States facilities.

The Government have no mandate in Scotland and Wales to pursue their divisive social and economic programme. In addition, by pursuing their foreign policy programme of putting a higher priority on unilateral escalation of the arms race rather than on multilateral disarmament through arms control measures, they are a threat on the international scene. The Prime Minister should realise that her internal and external responsibilities will be very grave during the pursuit of the Government's programme over the next four years.

5.16 pm

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): I congratulate the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on his maiden speech. He spoke about the engineering industry and about Sheffield and the steel industry. I am chairman of the parliamentary group for engineering development and I find it one of the most interesting committees that I have attended. That is because we are concerned to see that our manufacturing industry is brought up to date so that it can create wealth to try to carry out many of the things that the hon. Member for Brightside mentioned.

When one visits industrial firms it is exciting to see the progress that is being made. That is especially true of computer-aided manufacture and design. The more

progress that we make and the more skill that we have the more we shall be able to compete with West Germany and Japan and with our other competitors. That will enable us to create the wealth that is needed to solve some of the difficult problems in the inner cities and in manufacturing industry.

We must not discount what is already being done. In my constituency I have two engineering companies and they are exporting machine tools to Japan. Another company, which is a joint enterprise with the Americans, is exporting 18 per cent. of its products to Japan. That is the sort of thing that is being done and we must not be disparaging about our engineering industry. One of the things that we must do is to see that it is encouraged more to carry out research and development. We must also see that we have skilled teachers in industry and in our schools to encourage those people who can use their skills to create the kind of quality that is required to enable us to compete.

Those are some of my thoughts. I am glad to say that after only two years about 120 hon. Members are members of the parliamentary group for engineering development. I hope that other hon. Members will follow their example. I should like to say a lot more but this is not the time or the place to do it.

One of my reasons for welcoming this third term of office by the Prime Minister is the continuity that it will bring to the economy and to foreign affairs. Given the Prime Minister's experience in the realm of foreign affairs, I am sure that she will be able to make a great contribution towards solving some of our problems. As it says in the Queen's Speech:

"My Government will work for greater trust and confidence between East and West".

I had the good fortune to be in China in April this year. I had been there 10 years previously. The change that had taken place in that country's economy over that period was something that had to be seen to be believed. The difference was that the Chinese Government had moved to much more of a market economy from a centrally controlled economy. The farmers, instead of working for the state, were able to work for themselves and put their profits in the bank. The same applied to many small businesses.

The litmus paper that I have in our relations with Russia is whether this will happen there. I sincerely hope so. We must watch this carefully. Mr. Gorbachev is having a fight with the old guard and those who look backwards and not forwards over whether he will be able to create competition and a market economy, which can lead to less centralisation. In that context, we must examine the balance of power.

I have just been in Washington and I know the importance of our being a member of NATO. We want to see more disarmament, both nuclear and conventional. However, until we see change in the economy of the Soviet Union, we have to look at the great military power of the Soviet Union, whether in chemical weapons, in terms of the nuclear Typhoon submarine or of the conventional navy. We must be realistic about that and learn about it. However, we have great hopes that we are now on a different threshold and will be able to get a better understanding than we have yet been able to achieve. This is why I am delighted that we have this continuity of Government and that my right hon. Friend the Prime

[*Sir Julian Ridsdale*]

Minister has been able to visit the Soviet Union, and has been able to discover what is happening in other parts of the world. I hope that this will bear fruit for all of us.

I have looked at the amount of business that we have to do in the House in the next 18 months, and I fear that we shall not have much time to debate foreign affairs. Therefore, I hope that the importance of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs is realised, particularly in the part of the world in which I am interested—Japan, China and the new industrial countries. I hope that the Government will consider creating a sub-committee of the Foreign Affairs Committee to deal with those countries because there would then be the possibility of debating in much greater depth, and gaining much greater knowledge of, these countries, and the debates that took place on the Floor of the House would be better.

Two points arose in my constituency during the general election. About 40 per cent. of my electorate are retired people, many of whom are over 75 years of age. That means that they suffered more than most people in the inflationary period that we had to face from 1977 to 1981. There is a case for the Government to look at this to see whether some differential help can be given. Some of these people are on the margin and do not have a great deal of capital, so need such help. Undoubtedly, that age group is having a difficult time and is finding it hard to face up to modern costs of living.

There is also the problem of single people living alone. I welcome the Government's proposed changes in local government finance — something that I have been pressing them to carry out for a long time. I hope that when people discuss a community tax or poll tax, they will think about how they can help single people living alone, particularly widowers or widows. Undoubtedly, the changes that the Government have proposed will help those who are not earning a great deal. One should compare the case of the single earner living alone with that of a family of five wage earners in the house next door. Something must be done about such anomalies, so I welcome the Government's rating proposals.

I welcome the proposals in the Queen's Speech. I am delighted that we have this continuity of Government, which was needed not only for industry but for the country as a whole.

5.25 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I am obliged to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make my speech in the first and the most important debate of this new Parliament.

I am proud to stand here on behalf of the people of Nottingham, North — the community in which I was born and raised, and which has sent me here to fight for its interests. Nottingham, North is a community now on the borderlands of a Britain divided between the stricken north and the affluent south, a borderland which produces a political turbulence which I hope will be strong enough to make and unmake Government majorities. The sooner that that happens, the better it will be for all of us.

I gladly continue the convention and pay tribute to my predecessor — a Conservative — Mr. Richard Ottaway, who in his time as Member for Nottingham, North acquitted himself both in the constituency and, I understand from his colleagues, in the House with dignity

and courtesy. He and his party fought a skilled and professional local campaign, and it is the highest possible tribute to the Nottingham, North Labour party workers that we emerged victorious from the contest. We will relearn much from our opponents, not least the basics of the effective use of organisers at national and local level, the use of telephone canvassing and all the modern campaigning techniques.

The brilliant flash of a four-week campaign at national level, while it is essential, should be only a complement to, and not a substitute for, the years of unglamorous organisational work that is necessary to underpin our Democratic Socialist ideals at local level. We must learn quickly so that we can win the next election, but also so that we can be at our most effective in opposition over the next four years.

This is necessary above all because in the country, and in particular in my constituency — where we are afflicted with a Conservative council as well as a Tory Government — people will look to us to defend them against the excesses and extremism that seep from every pore of the Queen's Speech. The quaint parliamentary language remains the final veil covering the real hideousness of the "hidden manifesto" to which the electorate were not, and still are not, privy.

I am indebted to the older hands on the Labour Benches who suggested that I read the maiden speech of my predecessor. In 1983 he rightly referred to the industrial might around my constituency, to Boots the Chemists, Raleigh cycles, the royal ordnance factories and Babbington pit, one of the local collieries.

My first sad duty is to report to the House that since that time Babbington pit and our neighbouring colliery of Hucknall have closed, Boots has "restructured" and Raleigh cycles, a shell of its former self, has been sold off — an ironic monument to the bankruptcy of the "on yer bike" philosophy. Royal ordnance factory Chilwell and Thorn EMI have closed permanently, and ROF Nottingham is to be privatised, which will lead to further job losses in conventional arms manufacturing in my constituency. What a boost it would have been had this House now been committed to strong, secure conventional defence instead of one-sided, rundown and multi-faceted job losses in my constituency. The other industrial giant in Nottingham, North, John Players Tobacco, has only postponed redundancies at the expense of fellow workers in Swindon.

Ten thousand jobs have gone. Ten thousand real people with real families have been wasted. That is Nottingham's profit from the victory of 1983. We want those jobs back and I want to make it clear to the House and the people of Nottingham that my overriding priority will be to undo the damage caused by what are called the Thatcher years so that all those men and women who want work can have it.

The east midlands as a region for so long protected from the recession has been catching up with a vengeance. The same applies to Nottingham's council estates and to our hospitals and pensioners and to all the other areas that lie emaciated by a Government fat on the arrogance of 13 years of unfettered power.

The Queen's Speech today piles on the agony and I will seek to make my contribution as the Labour party exposes the proposals line by line while promoting our positive and constructive alternative inside and outside Parliament. We must demonstrate, especially to the young, that the

practice of our democracy amounts to more than a four-yearly TV special. Then, and only then, will "anyone with a conscience" refuse to waste their vote on third parties whose only contribution has been to deliver a second and third term to a Government despised by half the nation. However, that debate will await another day.

Impatient as I am as a newcomer to Parliament—and if I had a desk, I would bang it—I wish to avoid the pitfall of William Cobbett who made his maiden speech early in the 19th century after listening to just one debate and pronounced:

"Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that since I have been sitting here I have heard a great deal of vain and unprofitable conversation."

Mr. Speaker, since I have been sitting here it is clear that the electors of Nottingham, North have given me more than a ringside seat to witness today's drawing up of the battle lines for a new Parliament. In the face of overweening Government power, I hope for a Parliament in which Back Benchers will be not merely onlookers but participants. With your assistance, Mr. Speaker, and in Gladstone's words, while we will not run the country we will and must, ever more effectively, "hold to account those who do."

5.32 pm

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): My first very pleasant duty is to congratulate the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on his maiden speech. We also very much appreciate his comments about his Conservative predecessor.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North comes from the east midlands and I come from the west midlands. Obviously we have a certain amount in common with regard to the amount of industry and commerce which we have lost and which I hope we will regain. With regard to the hon. Gentleman's comments and hopes for the Back Benchers, I think that our present Speaker—and I am not trying to flatter Mr. Speaker—is particularly careful and anxious about looking after the interests of Back Benchers at all times. We therefore hope to hear much more from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North in the debates to come.

I welcome the Queen's Speech not only for the Bills proposed, but for its tenor. This Parliament meets after several difficult years for the economy, particularly in the early 1980s and, prior to that, the many years of "stop go". It is now very difficult for us to comprehend the fact that good times and much better times are coming. Morale is just as important in a nation as in an army. Morale is improving everywhere, even in the darkest corners. I was enormously impressed by the keenness and interest shown by young people in the election, many of whom supported the Government, although they had not been voters when the previous Labour Government were in power.

We must never talk down our achievements as a nation. The nation and the Government have great successes to their credit across the whole economic front. They include low inflation, high productivity, increasing production, increasing sales at home and above all abroad, excellent labour relations and a higher standard of living for most people. Apart from the very important issue of defence, those achievements were the reason why the Conservative party won the election.

I was amazed, even in my hard-working constituency, to see the improvement in the lives of ordinary working

people over the past four years. I was amazed to see the new homes that have been purchased and how well they had been painted and cared for. I was amazed by the immaculate gardens that were so well tended. Often there was a car in the drive and sometimes there were two. People have savings in the bank or building society or possibly own shares. Of course they have holidays abroad; indeed, many have been to Spain already. I have not been anywhere so far this year. I was very proud to see children leaving school at 3.15 pm so well turned out. What a credit they were to us. When I remember the conditions that existed when I was a boy 60 years ago, I thank God for what has happened.

Of course the nation has its dark spots and we have heard much reference to them today. Scotland is a puzzle to me. I have spoken in Scotland on only three or four occasions, but I have always enjoyed it. Had I not been born an Englishman, I would have wanted to have been born a Scotsman. I know something of the history of the Scottish people. They used to be a proud and independent people who went all over the British empire. There were Scots engineers on almost every ship on the oceans. However, in recent years millions of pounds from the British taxpayer have been poured into that country without apparently doing any good.

In the west midlands we know about recession. Our recession from 1980 to 1983 was one of the worst in the country. Masses of factories closed and many firms went bust. However, I was struck by the fact that my constituents hardly ever complained. I can remember only two managing directors telling me that their firms were going bust. I rarely saw workers out of work and they never asked me to put my hand into the Government's till. They did not want handouts. Instead, at each election they returned me with ever-increasing majorities. Now the west midlands is beginning to boom again, and boom it will.

This is hard for me to say, but I must tell the truth. During the election campaign in which I met hundreds of people, I found that those making a go of their lives were nearly always Conservatives. Perhaps that lack of go has been part of the reason for difficulties in some parts of the country. The tenor and purpose of the Government is to set people free from the shackles of the state or the trade union or restrictive practices in their professions so that they can give of their best. Surely in Scotland there are enough leaders and people with go to ensure that salvation will come from the people—from the individuals helping themselves rather than expecting help from the taxpayer in London. As I say so often in Parliament, leaders are needed at every level in society. With good leaders the rest will follow, and that can be seen in the armed forces. Whether or not the people in Scotland live on porridge, I cannot accept that they are so different from the rest of us that they cannot get up and go. I appeal for them to do that.

I have an inner city area on my doorstep in Birmingham. I have seen improvements that have been made there and I know others will be made. However, there must be a partnership among Government, industry, the local authority and individuals who are prepared to start businesses, to take part in new enterprises, to live in the area and to improve it. I cannot see why that is not being done in more places apart from in the midlands.

We have in this island certain difficult social problems to overcome. One of the most serious and worrying is the enormous increase in crime. That was the one matter

[Mr. John Stokes]

about which I heard from everybody in my constituency day after day with monotonous regularity. I welcome what the Government have done to combat crime by increasing the police force, their better pay, which in some cases is now very high indeed, the building of more prisons, sterner sentences and the Criminal Justice Act. But somehow the Government and others have forgotten a most important factor—the moral dimension.

Most crime is committed by youngsters, and some are very young indeed. Yet why do we seldom hear about that? Why do not teachers, the clergy and everyone in positions of responsibility say that the first thing is the family and the authority, and the respect in which it is held, of the father in the family? What are parents doing when young people are committing such awful offences? Surely there must be a need for good moral and Christian teaching to regain the standards that we used to have in Britain. Before the war, with much more poverty, there was much better behaviour, and so poverty does not seem to cause crime.

Something else that has worried me greatly since the election is what I call the further treason of the clerks. By that I do not just mean *The Observer* and *The Guardian*. Almost the whole intellectual world, including the bishops, some of the clergy and the universities are bitterly hostile to and critical of the Prime Minister to an almost scandalous extent. My own university, Oxford, which I love so dearly and of which I have been so proud, made a complete fool of itself in denying the Prime Minister an honorary degree. How much greater a fool it must be now in not giving her one straightaway for being Prime Minister three times in succession, and Prime Minister, of course, as a woman.

Mr. Canavan: And give the hon. Gentleman a knighthood.

Mr. Stokes: Nothing less than an earldom.

What was Oxford's petty grievance about? After years and years of overfunding, too many universities, too many students, colossal inflation in professors, some of whom were less good than they might have been, there was a cut in university grants, which did not affect Oxford which continued in its own extremely comfortable way. I know because I live 10 miles away. But now we have Professor Sir Mark Richmond, chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, saying what a good thing the cuts of the last six years were and that they provided an enormous kick up the pants.

But it is not only the intellectuals who hate the Prime Minister. Some people—not in my sensible constituency—among the middle class members of the Social Democrats and Liberal parties are anti-Thatcher, unpatriotic and out to get all that they can from the welfare state. Yet they call us Tories uncaring. Care is an individual matter. It does not mean making the other fellow pay more tax to ease one's conscience. There is hardly a Tory lady, in my constituency or elsewhere, who does not do all kinds of good works—the charities, the voluntary welfare services, church work and much else. In fact, they are so busy doing other things that they do not always have enough time to attend to their Conservative business. I object to being called callous and non-caring.

I feel a responsibility for each and every one of my 79,000 constituents, although I do not necessarily want to give them all more taxpayers' money.

I welcome many of the new Bills, but I hope that with the great amount of proposed legislation we are not allowing our enthusiasm to run away with us. We must take it steady and progress step by step. The most important Bill is the one which will allow more rented accommodation so that there can be far greater mobility of labour. The lack of rented accommodation is a great difficulty in getting people from the midlands and the north to move south to where so many of the jobs are.

I welcome the improvement proposed for the running of state schools. I do not know why, but they have failed dreadfully. The teachers must share part of the blame for that and, I suppose, the parents. When I was a boy, 50 or 60 years ago, everybody I knew could read and write. Now my jobcentres tell me that 10 to 20 per cent. can neither read nor write, nor do elementary sums. That is a dreadful indictment of our education system since the war.

I am also glad that council tenants will be able to have more freedom in choosing their landlords, and, having seen something of the housing associations, I think that they are a good thing.

Many of my trade unionist constituents will welcome greater freedom in deciding whether to go on strike, how to choose their leaders and how to conduct their affairs. I am glad that we are excluding Sunday from the change in the licensing laws so as not to raise a hornets' nest. If sensibly done, the changes will go through without much contention.

We are giving this welfare state United Kingdom more freedom and responsibility. There is still a colossal amount to be done. There are still far too many quangos. Far too much Government money is spent. The Civil Service is still far too big and local authorities are still far too overstuffed. But we are getting it right. Things are getting better. The Tory party is here not, as some people say, to encourage yuppies, but to encourage ordinary people who work hard and honestly every day of their lives, as do many of my constituents. The people everywhere are being given the opportunity to earn more and to have more of the good things in life—and what is wrong with that? But the Tory party must never forget that man does not live by bread alone.

5.46 pm

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): I shall confine most of my remarks to the Scottish dimension of the Queen's Speech. There is very little mention of Scotland in the Queen's Speech although, perhaps significantly, it has been mentioned by several speakers in the debate so far, including the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes).

The hon. Gentleman seemed to conjure up an image of the Scots as a nation of beggars looking for handouts from the English Treasury. On reading *Hansard*, many Scots will find his remarks deeply insulting. Even on revenue-raising within the United Kingdom the hon. Gentleman seems to forget that, due to legislation enacted by the previous Labour Government, the Tory Government have had the opportunity of £50 billion of North sea oil revenues, much of it coming from Scottish waters and much of it produced through the enterprise and hard work

of Scottish workers. Therefore, I strongly resent his remarks and the image of the Scottish people that he tried to put across.

The Prime Minister made several references to Scotland. They may not have been in her original speech as drafted, but, under pressure from various interventions, she did at one stage say that she was sure that many people in Scottish constituencies will welcome the return of a Conservative Government because of their defence policy. That shows how out of touch she is with Scottish public opinion. The vast majority of the people of Scotland would gladly swap the Trident missile for a Scottish Parliament with legislative and economic powers, directly elected by and accountable to the people of Scotland.

We need a Scottish Parliament to defend the Scottish people, not against an external enemy but against the enemy within. After eight years of Thatcherism, the Scottish people know, probably more than most people in the United Kingdom, the need for more defence against the evils of mass unemployment, deprivation, homelessness and all the other ills which have been visited upon the Scottish people over the past eight years. The Tory party was the only party which fought the election in Scotland with no proposals for any form of Scottish parliament. It is no wonder, therefore, that as a result it is reduced to a discredited rump of 10 hon. Members. It is arrogant of them to refuse to respond to the legitimate demands for devolution in Scotland by saying that the demand does not exist. There are other Conservative Members, perhaps not all of them, who say, "It is not a top priority, it was not a major issue during the general election campaign and it is not a major issue now."

I agree that there are other big issues, but probably the biggest in the election campaign in Scotland was the mass unemployment which has been deliberately created by this Government. The fact that there are over one third of a million unemployed people in Scotland was why 76 per cent. of the people of Scotland rejected the Tory Government in the ballot box. However, there were other issues, such as housing, education, the National Health Service, the iniquitous poll tax proposals, and social services for the elderly, sick and disabled. All those issues are linked to the demand for devolution and more say in the running of our affairs. Devolution and the Scottish parliament were key issues in the Labour party manifesto because they were to be the means of delivering many other commitments such as a fairer system of local government revenue raising, better social services for the elderly, sick and disabled, a better funded and more democratic Health Service, more education opportunities, and better housing opportunities, and they would have made a significant contribution to the regeneration of the Scottish economy to help to get many Scots back to work.

As a result of the general election—I am not the only hon. Member who has said this in this debate—the Government received no democratic mandate from the people of Scotland. In reply to my brief intervention this afternoon, the Prime Minister said that some previous Labour Governments had no mandate to govern England because they had not won a majority of the seats in England. She said that we are all members of a unitary state called the United Kingdom, or words to that effect. No party has ever fought and won a general election in England on a commitment in a manifesto for home rule for England or on the setting up of a devolved English parliament. I detect no demand for the setting up of an

English devolved parliament. Many of my hon. Friends who represent constituents in the English regions want decentralisation and a form of devolution in their areas. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Hefler), who was no great devolutionist in the 1970s, seems to have changed his tune, because in the aftermath of the general election he said that if the Scots wanted to declare UDI the people of Merseyside would gladly go with them. The people of Scotland face similar problems to those of Merseyside, Tyneside, Teesside and many of the other depressed areas of England.

The case for Scottish devolution or Scottish home rule is unique and I shall mention four reasons why the Scottish case is unique. First, Scotland is not a county or region. The people of Scotland constitute a nation and, like the people of any nation in the world, they are entitled to as much self-determination as they want. Secondly, Scotland is unique, not just in this House but in the world because it has its own legal system and its own body of Scots law, but it has no legislature to deal with that law. All Scottish laws have to be passed through this over-centralised and over-burdened Parliament. Thirdly, the Scottish case is similar to that in Wales because we have this thing called the Scottish Office. There is already a degree of administrative devolution, but the ministerial team heading the Scottish Office is not directly accountable to the people of Scotland. They were rejected by over 76 per cent. of the people of Scotland at the general election, so the Secretary of State for Scotland appears to the people of Scotland to be some sort of colonial governor general with no democratic mandate from the people whom he rules. Fourthly, in Scotland a clear-cut demand has been expressed through the ballot box. Some 76 per cent. of the people of Scotland voted for parties which were committed to some measure of home rule. The vast majority of them would settle for a devolved Scottish parliament with legislative economic powers.

I warn the Government that they had better respond to that legitimate demand. In the first instance it is being demonstrated in a democratic manner in this House. It is up to the Government and this House to respond, otherwise the Government will be heading for trouble in this place and for the possibility of a constitutional crisis inside and outside of this place. Surely it would be ironic if the Prime Minister, who prides herself on flying the Union Jack all the way from Finchley to the Falklands, went down in British history as the Prime Minister who, because of her intransigence, helped to break up the union that she seeks to protect.

5.56 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I am afraid that I am not very familiar with the problems of Scotland, although I spent a certain amount of my youth there. However, I am certain that there are as many Scottish Members in Scotland who would not like devolution as there are Scottish Members who would, but one must strike a balance between the two.

After eight years of strict economies we have a platform on which we can expand our economy and I was glad to read in the Queen's Speech that defence was one of the first matters to be placed on the agenda. It says that Trident will be retained and that there will be an increase in the effectiveness of conventional forces until a balanced and verifiable arms agreement is achieved which does not leave us at a disadvantage. Working with our American allies

[Dr. Alan Glyn]

and NATO we must try to achieve the ban on chemical and biological weapons which is mentioned in the Queen's Speech. We have abandoned those dreadful weapons, but the Soviet Union and its allies still have large stocks of them. We must balance our needs and those of the United States which, in the case of defence, may not be exactly the same. At all costs, we must stick with the Americans and NATO in our attempts to achieve peace.

I was glad to see that mention was made of the Falkland Islands. While we are perfectly happy to negotiate with the Argentines, I was pleased that we had renewed our promise that we would honour our obligations to the Falkland islanders. We may talk about trade and the economy, but we must remember that the question of sovereignty cannot be negotiated.

Mention is also made in the Queen's Speech of the common agricultural policy. It is clear that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and her Cabinet are endeavouring to revise many aspects of that agreement, and I am sure that they will be successful, particularly with regard to the strict controls on Community spending, which in many cases is quite out of hand.

Probably the greatest of all our problems are unemployment and law and order. Unemployment is the most difficult to tackle, because essentially we must try to create new industries and ideas that will replace the old-fashioned industries that have disappeared simply because they were non-competitive. To do that we must ensure that each child leaving school has the opportunity of further training, particularly in technological trades. That should be combined with industry so that education in the new technological skills can be adapted to our industrial needs. That is the only way in which we shall be able to compete in a highly competitive world.

After all, everyone knows that we are moving towards a new technological revolution in which robots, machines and highly complicated devices are replacing men who have previously done the jobs. We must therefore adjust and ensure that the education of our young people is adapted to those needs.

That brings me to the reform of education which, I am glad to say, includes emphasis on parental choice. Parents have the right to choose. If a school is good, they will want to send their children to it. If it is bad, let it go to the wall. The parents should have the right to choose. A national curriculum which is also mentioned in the Gracious Speech is equally essential. Greater autonomy in the schools and more control over their financial resources are also desirable.

A very good school in my constituency called Altwood is threatened with closure by the local education authority. I hope that it will not be closed because, apart from being a church school, it provides a good technical education. When the children leave, they have a skill that they can employ in the new industries, and it is no good turning them out without such skills. In my opinion, those skills should be geared to industry. Industry should go into the schools. There should be an interchange, so that when the children leave school they are ready to go to work.

I am also pleased that schools will be able to opt out of the system if they so wish. I do not yet know all the details, but the general idea is that, instead of coming under the control of the local education authority, they should be allowed to get their money from the centre and

administer themselves in a manner that they would prefer. I am certain that in some areas many schools will opt for that choice.

We have already heard much about crime, and we shall continue to hear about it. It is not crime that we must tackle but the detection of crime. To achieve that, apart from sophisticated appliances, we shall need men on the beat. My own county of Berkshire needs at least 700 extra men over the next four years. Without them it cannot provide a proper police service. It is not out of place for me to say that I have discussed this with the chief constable, and it is clear that the police will be unable to do their job properly unless they have sufficient manpower. Even if more of the existing numbers performing clerical duties were put on the beat, there would still be a shortfall.

I am glad that further protection will be given to the individual trade unionist against the arbitrary authority of union bosses, because that is another aspect of freedom from bureaucracy.

We have much to do in the Health Service in Windsor and Maidenhead hospitals in my constituency. Far too much is spent on administration rather than on doctors and nurses. The relationship between the Health Service and the social services should be revised and the number of administrators should be cut.

The rating system has also been mentioned. I have served on a rating and valuation tribunal for more than 20 years and have seen the anomalies and inequalities that arise from the present system. For the life of me I have never been able to come up with an alternative system that would work. We in this House will have great difficulty in finding an alternative to the thoroughly bad system that now exists. I know from many years' experience that it is difficult to pull an easy solution out of the hat. I am sure that the House will be called upon to deliberate on this matter, and the task of finding a solution will be hard.

Let us look forward to a programme that enables us to move towards fuller employment, improved schooling, better opportunities and greater freedom of choice for the individual. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was right when she said that we are slowly converting our country into a property-owning democracy in which people own their own houses and shares. As a result, they feel that they are sharing in the prosperity that we all want to see.

Our attitude towards the new technologies must change. People must realise that the old-fashioned methods that served us so well in the past are now out of date. It is our duty to lead the nation into this new technological age which will be so different. If it is managed efficiently I am quite certain that our country can again become great. At present, thanks to the Prime Minister, our standing in the world is very high. It is now up to us in this Parliament to ensure that we are a prosperous and secure nation so that we can hand over to our next Government a system and country that are better than those we inherited.

6.7 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Like my colleague the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), I, too, am grateful for the opportunity of making my maiden speech during the debate on the Gracious Speech.

First, I wish to pay tribute to my predecessor, the right hon. Roy Mason, who retired after 34 years of service in

the House. During that time Mr. Mason served in a number of Governments and held a number of offices—Minister of State, Board of Trade, Postmaster-General, Minister of Power, President of the Board of Trade, Secretary of State for Defence and, latterly, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. It was an extremely distinguished political career—one that I shall be only too pleased to emulate and that I shall strive to copy. Throughout his career he represented his constituency fully. He is well respected by the people of Barnsley as well as by his former colleagues in the House. I am sure that the House will wish him all the best for his future and his retirement.

I now turn to the problems facing Barnsley, having particular regard to the contents of the Gracious Speech. Although it is proposed that there will be guaranteed places on youth training schemes for all school leavers under 18, in Barnsley hundreds of youngsters eligible for such schemes are unable to obtain places. Those young people, who wish to take part in the youth training scheme, are unable to do so because of the insufficient number of places provided for them. The Government's guarantee that all 1986 school leavers would be found places on youth training schemes by last Christmas could not be met at Barnsley. In January the Government gave another guarantee that all 17-year-olds would be found places this year. I am again informed that in Barnsley the local authority cannot meet that guarantee. Employers in the Barnsley area do not even have the capacity to take on youth trainees, let alone full-time regular employees.

Youth training schemes are not the solution to unemployment; they never have been and never will be. They are simply a method of removing young people from the unemployment register and providing employers with cheap and exploitable labour. There is considerable resentment among young people who cannot even become a part of what is a poor scheme. Many feel that they are being exploited and are being paid low wages for dangerous jobs in hazardous industries. Many trainees do not get places on the scheme of their choice and they are reluctant to take part in a scheme that they dislike. They are reluctant to gain experience in a job in which they do not wish to remain. Many youngsters are disillusioned from the beginning because they cannot even obtain places on a scheme. Perhaps the most telling reason for the resentment is that the schemes do not work. In my constituency less than 40 per cent. of youth trainees are successful in finding full-time work after their courses finish. Before giving further guarantees to the young people of Barnsley, perhaps the Government should examine their previous guarantees, which so far have failed.

The decision to take powers to withhold benefit from those who refuse youth training schemes, which was referred to in the Gracious Speech, is a callous and calculated act designed to remove any illusion of choice from youth training schemes and artificially to reduce further the level of unemployment. In my constituency there will be considerable concern that a further guarantee of YTS places has been suggested when the local authority cannot meet previous guarantees. There will also be concern among many unemployed people of all ages that the power to withhold benefit is the thin end of the wedge and a precursor to the American style workfare scheme

a system of welfare conscription where unemployed people have to take any sort of work or face destitution as an alternative.

My constituency will suffer under the Government's proposals for inner city development. The reorganisation of regional policy carried out in 1984 led to an increase in the number of designated intermediate areas. That has meant that Barnsley's chances of attracting badly needed enterprise and investment have been devalued. Inner city assistance will further weaken Barnsley's position by attracting enterprise to areas in inner cities and away from Barnsley and other similar towns. All that is despite the fact that Barnsley's level of unemployment is now the fifth highest in the country and that as recently as December 1985 it was the 27th highest. That is despite the fact that unemployment in Barnsley has been consistently higher than the average for development areas and that since the reorganisation of regional policy in November 1984 Barnsley's unemployment has increased to well over 20 per cent. In fact, between January 1985 and April 1986 Barnsley suffered the highest percentage increase in unemployment benefit claimants in the country.

There are precious few job vacancies in Barnsley. There is an average of 80 unemployed people for every listed vacancy and that compares to a national average of 18 per vacancy.

The Government's proposal to bring aid to inner cities is obviously very welcome in the areas concerned, but it is a short-sighted measure bearing in mind that the most recent studies have shown that the drift from urban to rural locations is one that has been described as "more powerful and pervasive than any other trend in industrial location."

Old and restricted inner city sites cannot provide the space for expansion that is required by newer enterprises. Therefore, I urge the Government to rethink their policy of regional aid, particularly in view of the effect on intermediate areas, such as my own constituency, which will undoubtedly suffer as it did under the 1984 regional policy review and which stands to gain nothing from inner city aid. In particular, consideration should be given to increasing the number of areas designated as development areas. I would include Barnsley among those. Before any programme of inner city aid is embarked upon, some consideration should be given to those areas and to the areas highlighted earlier in the debate. I ask the Government to pay special attention to unemployment in Barnsley and to consider it as a special case.

6.15 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): It gives me real pleasure to congratulate the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) on his extremely lucid speech. I well remember sitting almost exactly where he is now 23 years ago and having a note passed up from the Front Bench which said that Mr. Speaker was going to call me next. That was for my maiden speech. I showed the note to my neighbour and he said, "Don't worry. It's like being sick. You feel better afterwards." The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central has given us such a superb speech this afternoon that I shall look forward to hearing him on many occasions. I agree entirely with all that he said about his predecessor. The hon. Gentleman's most interesting comments on youth training and the way in which he spoke up for his constituents will make his speeches in the future something to which we shall look forward.

[Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson]

There are no surprises in the Queen's Speech. The speech is the embodiment here in Parliament of the manifesto upon which we fought and won the general election. It is a speech that has been debated already throughout the nation, and the nation's verdict was one of total certainty, sending the Conservative Government to Parliament with the second highest majority since the war. Listening to the Leader of the Opposition and other Opposition Members one can only now understand how it was that they failed totally to attract the support of the people of this country. There was nothing new in what they had to say. Indeed, there was no policy in what they had to say. The Labour party has become the party of protest over the past eight years. The Opposition have a vested interest in bad news and all they seek to do is frighten the electorate of this country into believing that the future will be far worse than anything in the past. The fact remains that they have been rejected.

I regard the Gracious Speech as a magnificent blueprint for the next four and a half or five years. There are a number of matters in it to which I should like to draw attention. Since it is so wide-ranging I shall try to be as brief as I can on the individual points that I wish to raise.

In paragraph five on page two there is a reference to the Government playing

"a leading role in the development of the European Community."

Many in the House and outside have wished to see that role take on the part of a political union and a complete monetary union under the European monetary system. Being members of an enormous group of strong economies such as those within the EEC, it is, of course, important that we should work closely together. However, I caution the Government against joining a monetary system that would inhibit rather than strengthen our performance in the future. Indeed, I would go further and say that in the world economy today the European monetary system is little more than a side-show. It is a side-show isolated from the real issues, such as how one balances a world economy where the greatest debtor is the United States and where the greatest surplus lies in Japan. I hope that we do not believe that by joining that organisation we can somehow enhance our economic performance in the future. We would shackle ourselves with all the restrictions in that system which would lead to the imposition of enormously high interest rates, if there are fluctuations in our currency, brought about by the fact that we are a significant oil producer, and we would face strains different from those of many of the existing member states. Therefore, I hope that we shall resist the siren voices that seem to believe that that is the way forward now that the Tory Government have been re-elected.

Like every Member of the House, I welcome the Government's determination to tackle inner city problems. When I made my maiden speech 23 years ago, I was the Member for Lewisham, West in south London and I am, therefore, familiar with the problems of inner city deprivation. I have represented a rural constituency for the past 20 or more years. Of course, there is inner city deprivation, but there is also rural deprivation. One could concentrate all the services on which a rural community depends in the big cities and create great problems for those living in rural areas, with frequently indifferent transport links, which would be almost as serious as those

in the worst inner city areas. Therefore, I hope and pray that in our determination to tackle that glaring problem, we shall not turn our backs on the rest.

In my constituency there is a well-known and well-loved maternity home at Barton on Sea, the Grove maternity home, which is currently being reviewed with the possibility of closure. There is a belief that in some way the cases that are treated there can go to one of the big facilities in Southampton or elsewhere. I hope that when the Government finally review the matter—it has now progressed from the regional health authority—they will make certain that local views and demand are taken into account. I hope also that we do not receive the broad-brush treatment and that the people in the big city of Southampton will not think that cases in the rural areas of the New Forest are not worth considering.

However, I wish to devote most of my remarks to the Government's proposals for local government finance and education. I should like to link the two together because it makes sense to do so. I have long been a strong advocate of rate reform. As we well know, under the current system less than half of the electorate pay rates but everybody uses the services. Under the current system a local property tax prevents and is hostile to those who want to improve their property. There are now so many exceptions to the system that it is held in disrepute. There can be no doubt that reform has been needed for a long time. Indeed, in 1974 my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that that should be one of our priorities. I support totally the idea of reforming the domestic rating system. However, that system carries on its back burdens that should be outside the scope of local government finance.

Since I have been a Member of the House I have seen several local government reorganisations. When I was the director of the London Municipal Society at the end of the 1950s and in the early 1960s, I spent a great deal of time going around London promoting the concept of a Greater London council. Of course, it was a Conservative Government who introduced that body. In 1972 there was yet another large reorganisation of local government. However, at no point until now have we tackled the problem of local government finance. We have put sticking plasters over the problem in the form of various rate-capping schemes, but until now we have never considered it in detail.

Therefore, when my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for the Environment, now the Secretary of State for Education and Science, announced his Green Paper in January 1986 in the House with suggestions for real local government finance changes, he received a warm welcome. However, the way in which those changes were constructed began to cause concern in some people's minds, and especially in mine.

On 28 January 1986, I asked the Secretary of State whether he had considered taking the biggest single item of local government expenditure out of local government finance and putting the responsibility on to the central Exchequer. I was referring to education, because that is the single biggest item. His lengthy and helpful reply covered several points. First, he said:

"We have considered that possibility, as have previous Governments."

He continued:

"If the annual financing of education is removed from the local authorities, ultimately the power will end up with a central education service."

Finally, he said:

"I ask my hon. Friend, and those who feel that that is an easy answer, to consider and reflect what that would mean to local government. The powers and responsibilities of local government would be considerably diminished."—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 806.]

That was in January 1986, before the proposals that are embodied in this Gracious Speech had been made public. Those proposals are radical and I welcome them for that. They make sense and refer to direct funding of schools so that they can be run by the people whose children attend them and by those who teach in them. I welcome that.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has referred to a core curriculum, and it is mentioned again today in the Gracious Speech. Again, that would mean an opportunity for decisions affecting schools to be taken at the centre. Indeed, the decisions that are now being discussed would meet the problems to which my right hon. Friend referred in his answer to me in January 1986, in that the education system is more and more bypassing the local education authority altogether.

Sadly, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science had to impose a settlement on the teachers' dispute. That was a decision from a Minister. A core curriculum would be a decision from the centre, and there is now the opportunity of funding schools direct from the centre. If all of that is happening, what is the objection to recognising that teachers, and teachers' pay, should also be funded from the centre? One hears about local involvement. My right hon. Friend made that clear in his answer to me. How real is that? How much real control do our constituents have over the schools in the areas where they live? The answer is next to nothing. The vested interest which prevents that happening is that education remains the most important single power of county councils.

As I said earlier, I used to propose and promote the concept of the Greater London council. Therefore, when the decision was taken to abolish it, I received the news with a heavy heart. I believed that perhaps that council and others throughout the country were essential to the management of our large cities. I now happily admit that I was completely wrong. It is right to have abolished the Greater London council and the other metropolitan councils. It could be equally sensible to abolish the county councils also. To deal with the problem of education locally—as is now offered to us in the Gracious Speech—and to expect ratepayers and poll tax-payers to fund teachers' salaries is asking too much. After all, we pay doctors from the centre. So why not teachers? We have district and regional health authorities. We pay doctors, as I should like to see us pay teachers, on a tax structure which is not only in place, but which is broadly fair. I have nothing against the concept of everyone paying something towards the cost of local government. I have nothing against the belief that if one pays for a service one values it and that since everyone uses local services they should contribute towards them. However, switching from the present system without making that change in the funding of education will place a colossal new and unfair burden on the British people.

Already we are talking about exemptions. A colossal bureaucracy will be necessary to keep track of itinerant people in the big cities and elsewhere to ensure that they pay their contribution. If we take the biggest single item

of expenditure out of local finance and pay for it from the centre where the Inland Revenue is already in place to collect the necessary funds—we can by all means use our community charge as a way of involving everyone in the cost of local services—it makes sense, but to abolish the existing system and to replace it with a community charge which must meet the colossal expense of education will create serious problems.

As I said at the beginning, this is a radical manifesto and it is the one on which the election was fought. As we know, there are no other examples in contemporary history of a Prime Minister achieving what my right hon. Friend has done. Although major problems remain to be solved—and they will be solved: we are already tackling them—the Prime Minister spoke for the aspirations and beliefs in the future of ordinary people when she spoke here today. She deserves our support.

6.31 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): This is not a maiden speech, although I believe that my reappearance after eight years with a new name and a new constituency has confused both Members and Officers of the House. However, I should like to observe one minor tradition of a maiden speech and to pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Alex Pollock, who was one of the 11 Scottish Conservative Members who lost his seat in the general election. He was a respected Member of the House and an honest, open opponent. I believe that his error was in fighting on the Government's record in Scotland which the Scottish people found unpalatable.

I also wish to pay tribute to my predecessors on this Bench—Mr. Gordon Wilson, who represented Dundee, East for 13 years, and Mr. Donald Stewart, who represented Western Isles for 17 years. This House will be a sadder place without them and their loss to the Scottish National party is deeply felt. We wish them well—Donnie Stewart in his retirement, and Gordon Wilson in his new career. We certainly hope that Gordon Wilson will in due course return, as my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) and I have done, although perhaps without waiting the eight years that we had to wait to make our reappearance.

It will not surprise hon. Members if I, too, talk about Scotland and the issue of the Government's mandate or lack of mandate there. Between 1974 and 1979 I had the pleasure of listening to many debates on the future of Scotland. In this Session Scotland will once again dominate many of our political speeches and thoughts. It is honest for a member of a party such as mine which stands fully and unequivocally for the independence of the Scottish nation to state categorically that the Government have no mandate in Scotland. We see this as a constitutional problem which the Government must face quickly if we are to salvage any future for Scotland.

The Scottish Conservatives lost 11 Members and now there are 10 Conservative Members and 62 Opposition Members in the House. Seventy-four per cent. of the Scottish people voted against the Conservative Government in the election and no one can question those figures. They are on the record and a clear message is being sent to Westminster by the Scottish people. The same is true of Wales, where five Conservatives lost their seats. Now they have eight representatives left in the House, leaving an Opposition of 30.

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

That raises the issue of democratic accountability for the people of Scotland. A Solicitor-General has been appointed who does not hold a seat in the House. He was beaten in the general election by my hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East. Members in another place will have direct responsibility for vital areas of Scottish interest, such as agriculture and fishing. That means that there is no direct accountability in the House of the people with direct responsibility. The Government can appoint spokesmen if they wish, but that is not the same as offering hon. Members the opportunity to question directly in the House the actions of those who are responsible for deciding Scotland's future.

The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), in an eloquent speech, referred to Scotland and its problems and spoke about the need for a sensitive approach to the issue. I appreciate the courtesy, thoughtfulness and honourable intentions of the right hon. and learned Gentleman, but I remind the House that the Scottish issue is not new. Over the past 20 years the nationalist parties of Wales and Scotland have been continuously represented in the House. Many of our opponents wish that we would go away completely, but we are here and intend to use the democratic processes of this establishment. We are elected, just as other hon. Members are, by the democratic votes of our constituents to ensure that the fortunes of Scotland and Wales are not neglected in this Parliament.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman attempted an explanation of the rout of the Conservatives in Scotland. Part of his problem was that in his analysis he spoke of Scotland as a region. One of the great irritations that Scots of all political parties experience is others regarding Scotland as a region. He compared Scotland with other regions of the United Kingdom. We in the SNP have always argued that comparisons should be made with other nations with similar resources, particularly Norway which is similar in size and land area and has natural resources similar to those of Scotland. Perhaps such contrasts, which the Scottish people have been seeing, have made them reject so firmly Conservative policies. Compared with Norway, Scotland has far higher unemployment and fewer resources invested in the economy to ensure our future.

The Gracious Speech in no way responds to the mood of the Scottish people or to the issues facing them. Those who analyse the results in Scotland should remember that the Government have appeared to pay no attention to the general election results. It is almost as if the election has not been held and the results have not occurred. Earlier this week the Secretary of State for Scotland said that not one iota of the Gracious Speech would be changed and my impression is that he was perfectly honest. I do not believe that one iota has been changed. Surely that is a failure in democratic response. Surely cognisance should be taken of the aspirations of the people of Scotland and Wales.

The Gracious Speech devotes all of two sentences to substantial Scottish issues. Earlier today, when she was questioned by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and my hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas), the Prime Minister seemed uncertain how much of the other

legislation would apply directly to the Scottish people. That will do nothing to reassure the Scots that their interests are being looked after here.

One of the two items mentioned is housing. What is required in Scotland is not tinkering with the system, but a major injection of public expenditure to ensure that we can bring the quality of public sector housing up to an acceptable standard, rid ourselves of old buildings and renovate those worth renovating. We have one of the most appalling housing records in Western Europe and the Queen's Speech does not show any sign of remedying that.

No mention has been made of the under-funding and under-resourcing of education — an important issue in Scotland. Aberdeen university, in the oil capital of Europe, as the city is known, is fighting for its existence. The lack of funding for the university means that research work is disappearing, departments are closing and staff, at all levels, are being made redundant. That university serves the north-east and the Highlands of Scotland and there is distinct anger in the Grampians and the Highlands about the treatment that Aberdeen university has received. The Gracious Speech should have contained a much more direct advance towards the kind of expenditure levels that we wish to see.

The final issue in the Queen's Speech, and one which has been exercising the minds of many hon. Members south of the border, is the poll tax. When analysing the results of the election in Scotland I warn Conservative Members to pay great attention to what happened there. The poll tax was rejected by the Scottish people in the election. In Scotland it is regarded as an ill-thought-out, regressive tax, a measure of expediency brought in by a Conservative Government frightened by Conservative reaction to the third revaluation in Scotland.

From reading today's press, I understand that there is some rebellion within the Conservative ranks regarding the implications of a poll tax in England and Wales. I appreciate that rebellion and I will do everything to encourage it. However, the Scottish people will find it unacceptable that some of those hon. Members wish to wait to see what will happen in Scotland and how the poll tax will work there. One of the strongest feelings evident during the election campaign was a belief that the Scottish people were being used as guinea pigs. The fact is that 1989 is almost upon us, yet there is no indication when similar legislation will be enacted south of the border. The people of Scotland resent being looked upon as guinea pigs for a form of taxation that is unacceptable.

If the Government want to rethink the whole issue of local government funding, they should consider the possibility of local income tax. Other European nations use that system and it is feasible. It takes into account people's income and their ability to pay.

Conservative Members have spoken of the problems of the previous rating system. Everyone accepts that there were anomalies and injustices within the previous system and that they needed to be eradicated. However, the way to eradicate them is not to replace a bad system with one that is even worse. We regard the poll tax as one of the most regressive forms of local government funding. The Government will reap a whirlwind of antagonism south of the border if they go ahead and implement that system.

I remind the House that the people of Scotland have sent a clear message to the Government. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) spoke eloquently about the demand in Scotland for a Scottish Parliament. It is not

enough for Conservative Members to say that devolution or self-government is not an issue in Scotland when opinion poll after opinion poll suggests that up to 80 per cent. of the people wish to see some form of democratic control returning to Scotland. One third of those questioned supported the concept of independence. That concept has my support.

It is important for the Government to accept that there is a message coming from Scotland. Our recommendation is that people should be given the opportunity, through the establishment of a constitutional convention based in Scotland with representatives from all political parties, to debate how the government of Scotland can be best decided upon in an open and democratic fashion. There are Conservative Members who believe that there is a need for devolution in Scotland—some of them have been honest enough to admit that. I hope that they will support the concept of a constitutional convention and will join us to make sure that we can bring to Scotland the kind of democratic control and accountability that it so richly deserves.

6.44 pm

Mr. David Knox (Staffordshire, Moorlands): It is a great pleasure to follow and to welcome the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) back to the House of Commons after an absence of eight years. As the hon. Lady pointed out, hers was not a maiden speech; and I understand that the word to describe her speech is "retread". Between 1974 and 1979 the hon. Lady spoke frequently in this House and it is obvious that she is as articulate as ever. We look forward to hearing her frequently in the months and years ahead.

The hon. Member for Moray rightly paid tribute to her predecessor, Mr. Alex Pollock. Although I am quite pleased to see the hon. Lady back here, I am sorry that it was at the expense of Alex Pollock, who was a highly respected Member of the House.

The hon. Member for Moray spoke about the problems of Scotland. You may recollect, Mr. Speaker, that in your previous incarnation as Deputy Chief Whip you had a certain amount of trouble with me because I was one of those who during the 1974-79 Parliament voted consistently for devolution for Scotland. I frequently saw the hon. Member for Moray in the same Lobby.

The Gracious Speech contains a very full programme of legislation for the next 16 months. To return to the period of 1974-79, some of us remember that some of my right hon. Friends, when we were the Opposition, told us that there was far too much legislation and that the return of a Conservative Government would lead to much less legislation. Whatever else they may say, this is one promise that has certainly been broken in the past eight years. I see little evidence that it is not likely to be broken in the next five years. I believe that there is far too much legislation in the programme. However, I hope that the Whips have noticed the enthusiasm of my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold) for late nights and, no doubt, late Committees.

I welcome some of the proposals in the Gracious Speech. I warmly welcome the reform of housing legislation, the policies to revive the inner cities, the promotion of greater competition in the provision of local government services and the reform of licensing laws. Most of those proposals are overdue, especially reform of the licensing laws. It is quite absurd that in England the

licensing laws are more restrictive than they are in Scotland. The changes should have been effected down here a long time ago. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will not be too timorous in the proposals that he brings before the House. We need substantial modernisation in this sphere.

There are some measures in the Queen's Speech that I tend to view rather more critically. I am not very happy about some of the education proposals. I also have reservations about the proposals to reform local government and about the privatisation of water and sewerage functions.

I have considerable doubts about the proposals to allow schools to opt out of the state system. I got the impression that this matter had not been carefully and clearly thought out in advance. It will be up to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to convince the House and the country of the advantages and the workability of that proposal.

I have greater reservations and doubts about the community charge. I cannot see any good reason for the rush. Surely it would be sensible to see how this charge works in Scotland before imposing it on England. I am rather worried about the regressive nature of the community charge, and I am also worried about the ability of the authorities to compile an accurate register of those liable to pay.

We have all participated in the general election and we are all aware of the inaccuracy of electoral registers. When people are compiling electoral registers, there is no disadvantage in having one's name on it; indeed there are advantages. However, there would be substantial disadvantages in having one's name on the register to pay the community charge. I foresee substantial errors in that register. I ask my right hon. Friends to consider this matter carefully and to question whether it is necessary to rush at it at the suggested pace.

I can see no good reason for the privatisation of the water and sewerage functions. Some functions are better provided by the public sector, and others are much better provided by private enterprise. Generally speaking, water and sewerage services are much better provided by the public sector. I thought that that proposal had been dropped in the previous Parliament, but it seems to have been resurrected in the election manifesto and now in the Gracious Speech. I rather regret that.

Interesting as legislative measures are, the performance of any Government will always be judged on their management of the economy. There can be no doubt that in certain important and significant respects the British economy is stronger today than it was eight years ago.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Rubbish.

Mr. Knox: If the hon. Gentleman would just wait a minute or two, I might explain what I was talking about.

I said that in certain important and significant respects the economy is stronger than it was eight years ago. I was about to add: but there is obviously a lot of work to be done in other areas of the economy. The hon. Gentleman may disagree, but there can be little doubt in most people's minds that the balance of payments is much stronger today than it was eight years ago. Over the period that the Government have been in power, we have had surpluses since 1980, except for a very small deficit last year—

Mr. Maxton: It is called oil.

Mr. Knox: I repeat that we have had surpluses over that period. As a result of having those surpluses, it has been possible to build up substantial investments overseas, so that today, with the exception of Japan, this country is the largest holder of overseas assets in the world. That gives to the British economy a substantial strength internationally that it did not have before. One of the reasons why the fall in oil prices last year did not have the devastating effect that it would have had six or seven years ago is that we had that basic, fundamental economic strength from those investments.

Mr. Nellist: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Knox: No, I shall not give way.

The balance of payments is much stronger today than when the present Administration came to power. Those investments provide a cushion against the wilder international fluctuations.

On inflation, the situation is much better than it was eight years ago. The Government have a good record in that respect. We have got away from the galloping inflation of the 1970s, which at one time reached 25 per cent. That was bad for the British economy because it created uncertainty, and that was bad for industry and commerce. It was bad socially because those living on fixed incomes found that their real spending power was cut substantially year by year. Now we have got inflation down to about 4 per cent. That may not be perfect—it is not—and it is right and proper that the Government should aim to get inflation down to the rate that it was in 1958 to 1960, a nil rate, when, incidentally, Mr. Harold Macmillan was Prime Minister. But we have made substantial progress. If inflation is to be kept under control, there must be constant vigilance. One cannot just relax things, else it will be on an upward curve once again.

In this Parliament we must all look to the Government to maintain their very good balance of payments and inflation records. But I said that there are areas where much remains to be done. One of them is manufacturing industry. I find it deeply alarming that, in the first quarter of this year, output in manufacturing industry was lower than it was in the first quarter of 1974. Before the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) smiles too widely, I should tell him that in 1979, under a Labour Administration, it was lower than in 1974. So neither party has much to boast about on manufacturing industry, and a little modesty by some Labour Members would be becoming.

The record on unemployment over the past 13 years is far from good. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was Prime Minister, unemployment was less than half a million in the closing months of 1973. It more than doubled under the Labour Government and it has more than doubled under this Government. Neither party can be terribly proud of its record on unemployment, but surely the important thing is this: whereas unemployment rose steeply in the first four years of this Government, it levelled out after 1983—admittedly at much too high a level—and over the past 12 months it has been falling. I shall not make great claims about that, but at least it is moving in the right direction now.

If we are to effect an improvement on manufacturing output and unemployment, we need to give the economy a further boost. That involves relaxing the public sector

borrowing requirement a little and trying to get 1 or 2 per cent. more growth on top of the underlying growth in the economy. That would increase the demand for manufactured goods and for employment in that sector. I hope that the Government will look at that. When we come to the end of the current Parliament, we shall look not just for a good record on the balance of payments and inflation, but for a better record on manufacturing industry and unemployment.

In the Conservative election manifesto, reference was made, rightly, to the importance of small, rural schools for education and community life. The manifesto pledged that the Conservative party would ensure that the future of such schools was judged by wider factors than mere numbers. That matter will be soon put to the test in two schools in my constituency. The Labour-controlled Staffordshire county council proposes to close Waterhouses and Warslow middle schools in my constituency. Both were opened a mere eight years ago. Both have already been threatened once with closure. Four years ago the county council withdrew the threat to Waterhouses middle school, and three years ago the Secretary of State overruled the county council's desire to close Warslow middle school.

Neither school has had a real chance and the arguments put forward by the allegedly caring Socialist county council in Staffordshire for closing those schools are, frankly, bogus. First, the council says that there is a numbers argument, yet when the schools were opened the council knew roughly how many children would be at the schools this year because every child who is there now was born before the schools were opened in 1979. Having lost that argument, the county council said that there were financial reasons for closure.

Staffordshire county council is spending marginally more on school education today than in 1979 in real terms, even though it is responsible for educating fewer school children. I cannot see why the schools in Warslow and Waterhouses are not entitled to have the same amount of money spent on them now as in 1979, in exactly the same way as schools in Labour areas such as Stoke-on-Trent have the same amount of money spent on them.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will save those schools. I hope that he will give them a chance. When he has saved them, I hope that he will insist that Staffordshire county council resources the schools properly.

A matter that has caused me some concern is the consequences of the election results on this Parliament. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on her historic achievement. No one can take anything away from her in that respect. At the same time, Conservative hon. Members must recognise that in 1979 we received 43.9 per cent. of the popular vote. In 1983 it was 42.4 per cent. This year it was 42.3 per cent. On all three occasions the figures represented a lower proportion of the popular vote than any other post-war Tory Government received in an election. That means that the Government should proceed with caution and restraint over the next four years. I become alarmed when I hear about the Government's radical programme. Radical Government should be left to radical political parties. Conservative government should be the business of the Conservative party. Above all, given the proportion of the poll that the Government obtained in the recent election, during the next five years they should govern in a manner that shows

respect for the views of those who did not vote for them. A real effort must be made to obtain consensus on as many issues as possible.

A further point about the outcome of the election concerns Scotland. There is no doubt and no point in denying that the Government suffered a severe setback in Scotland. There is evidence that the Government are out of touch in Scotland in significant areas, even though large amounts of central Government money have been spent in Scotland—amounts that are disproportionate to its size and population. However, that is not a reason for complacency on the part of Conservative Members. The results in Scotland do not mean that the Government have no right to govern Scotland, any more than the failure of Labour Governments to gain more votes than the Conservatives in the 1964 and 1974 general elections in England deprived them of the right to govern England.

We are still a United Kingdom and it is important to remember that. With the exception of the nationalists, all the parties in this House believe that we are a United Kingdom. So, although the Government have a right to govern Scotland, I hope that they will be conscious of the hopes, aspirations and fears—all of them genuine—of the Scottish people.

I ask the Government to re-examine the issue of devolution. I supported the Labour Government's proposals for devolution in the mid-1970s and I have no regrets about that. Although the issue seemed to go away then, it will come back. I think it was the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham, who once said that he assumed that there were good reasons for opposing every Irish home rule Bill in the last century, but it was rather a pity that one of them had not reached the statute book. If it had, we might have been saved a great deal of trouble today. I am worried that if we continue to ignore people's feelings in Scotland about looking after their own affairs and having a greater say in them, we may end up with more severe problems than we have now. It is not a matter—whatever hon. Members may say—about whether Scotland will be better governed. The importance of devolution is that the Scots would have a greater say in looking after certain of their own affairs; and if things then went wrong they could blame only themselves. I believe that the Conservative party would best serve its own interests, and the interests of the United Kingdom and of the Scots, if it seriously reconsidered the question of devolution.

7.4 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) evidently understands the country of his birth considerably better than do many of his hon. Friends. The result of the general election in Scotland was very different from that in the rest of the United Kingdom. Like the hon. Gentleman, I believe in the United Kingdom. I want to see it remain in one piece, but the hon. Gentleman was right to say that if the Government whom he supports are as insensitive as they appear to intend to be—judging from the content of the Queen's Speech—the future of that United Kingdom could be in some peril.

The hon. Member for Moorlands has done a wise thing for a Scottish Conservative—he has gone south of the border to find himself a seat in Parliament, but he is certainly renowned in the House for delivering coded attacks on the Government. How on earth he gets away

with that when he is trying to defend the Government's record in his constituency is a matter for him, but I welcome his constructive and thoughtful contribution to the important Scottish aspect of the debate.

It was nice—I suppose—to hear again from the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). My last recollection of her and her hon. Friend the Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) was back in 1979. I remember both of them scuttling into the Lobby beside the then Conservative Opposition and voting the Labour Government out of office, thus putting devolution off the agenda and doing themselves out of seats in Parliament. A few days or weeks of quiet reflection on the part of the SNP might be appropriate, given the treatment that it received in the polls. The hon. Lady is welcome to hold a Conservative seat if she likes, but I am delighted that the Labour party has retained its seats and regained the Western Isles and Dundee, East from the tartan Tories.

This has been an almost unreal debate from the point of view of the people whom I and my hon. Friends represent in Scotland. One would think that the general election campaign and its result had not happened. There is no recognition in the Queen's Speech or in the speeches of Conservative Members of the grim division that now exists between one part of the United Kingdom and another. There is no recognition of the obliteration of the Conservative party north of the border. It would be useful if certain people could make themselves visible in the Strangers' Gallery: Sir Alex Fletcher, Anna McCurley, Michael Hirst, John MacKay, Michael Ancram, Peter Fraser, Albert McQuarrie, Gerald Malone, John Corrie, Alexander Pollock and Barry Henderson, to name but 11. Those people have had an awful doing north of the border, and I wonder whether their colleagues have learned anything from what has happened. The Prime Minister has indicated that she intends to go on inflicting her poisonous programme on Scotland as if nothing had changed. She wants to continue with the privatisation, the cuts and the closures. She wants to go on with the intolerable level of unemployment in Scotland and to continue to suppress local democracy there.

One of the first measures to come before the new Parliament will be yet another order affecting the freedom of elected local authorities in Lothian, Clackmannan and Edinburgh to deal with their own affairs. The Government still intend to ride roughshod over local democracy in Scotland. That is not on.

The figures for the election in Scotland show that 1,258,132 people voted Labour and that no fewer than 2,245,058 people voted against the Conservative party in Scotland. Only 713,099 people voted for the Tory party in Scotland on 11 June—only 24 per cent. of the electorate. Yet the Government think that they can carry on as if nothing had happened. On any analysis that result represents a potential constitutional crisis. The attitude expressed by the Prime Minister today is calculated to ensure that that constitutional crisis will come to a head sooner rather than later if she is not careful.

If the Government chose to be sensitive there would be a possibility of avoiding the sort of confrontation to which I am referring. If they decide to be insensitive and to ride roughshod over the clearly expressed views of the people of Scotland, that could be a recipe for the destruction of that union about which the hon. Member for Moorlands spoke. No member of a responsible party wants that to happen.

[Mr. John Home Robertson]

The hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold) referred to the position in Scotland, saying that he regarded the anomalies that would arise in Scottish Question Time as a bit of a joke. If those people were to pursue their logic to its conclusion, they would have to say that what they really want is to abolish the Scottish Office and simply incorporate the government of Scotland into the Whitehall Government machinery and make it part of England. I wish they would be honest and do that because then they would have to face the music in Scotland.

As things stand, the Government have no mandate in the Scottish context, yet they have the effrontery to say that they want to suggest further legislation. The Queen's Speech today referred to further legislation for education and housing in Scotland. If it was conciliatory legislation or legislation that was going to lead to the building of more houses to deal with the housing crisis I dare say that there would be a measure of support on both sides of the House. However, I am afraid that the Government's track record on that is not encouraging. If the Government want to legislate in Scotland I would love to know how they will do it because they have only 10 Members of Parliament left in Scotland, including the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Just.

Mr. Home Robertson: Just, with a majority of 182 in Ayr. Of the former Scottish Office team, all that is left is the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) and the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang). To make up a team of Ministers they have had to draft in the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas Hamilton), who parade around Edinburgh as if they were Ministers. We have a Mickey Mouse administration in Scotland which has no credibility of any description. They ponce around in official cars as if they represent somebody. They do not represent any strand of opinion in Scotland, and well they know it. One person who knows it very well is the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), who rather wisely opted for the freedom of the Back Benches.

The only Back Benchers the Government have are the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) and the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). How will they man a Standing Committee to legislate in Parliament? As I understand it, a Standing Committee must have 16 Members representing Scottish constituencies to consider Scottish legislation. To get a majority on such Standing Committees they will need nine of their 10 Members on it. I do not know whether the Secretary of State for Defence realises that he will spend much of his time sitting on Standing Committees that deal with Scottish statutory instruments. They have not even been able to appoint a Whip representing a Scottish constituency. The hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) will apparently be the Scottish Whip. Under the current Standing Orders he will not be allowed to sit on Scottish Committees. I dare say that that will be quite a relief to him. The Government will not be

able to legislate on Scotland unless they doctor the Standing Orders. It would be an outrage if they attempted to do that.

It should seem to all reasonable people, and I include the hon. Member for Moorlands, that this is the time for statesmanship. This is a time to recognise that the poll tax has been resoundingly rejected by the people of Scotland and that there is absolutely no case for continuing with the experiment in which Scotland is to be used as a guinea pig to try out the tax before it is introduced in England and Wales. That has been specifically and clearly rejected. It was a major debating point in the general election campaign and it would be an outrage if the Government were to try to impose that tax.

This is a time when a responsible Government should recognise the need for sympathetic initiatives to promote employment and to improve housing and the Health Service in Scotland. This is a time when the Government should recognise the facts of life in Scotland and should respond to the overwhelming case for democratic devolution. If anyone doubts that there is such a case for democratic devolution, I recommend that they read an interesting speech by the right hon. Member for Pentlands on 16 December 1976 in the Second Reading debate on the Scotland and Wales Bill when he said:

"Scotland is the only territory on the face of the earth which has a legal system without a legislature to improve, modernise and amend it. This is a crazy anomaly, and it cannot meet the requirements of 1976."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1976; Vol 922, c. 1832.]

It did not meet the requirements of 1976 and it does not meet the requirements of 1987. Now that the right hon. Member for Pentlands calls himself the Secretary of State for Scotland he could do worse than to consider the opinions which he expressed and argued for not so very long ago. There is an overwhelming case for constitutional reform in Scotland and for a degree of home rule within the United Kingdom. Scotland has voted for such constitutional reform at every possible opportunity for more than eight years. We voted for it in the referendum of 1979. We voted for it in the general election of 1979. We voted for it in the general election of 1983, and we voted for it most resoundingly and overwhelmingly of all in the general election of 1987. The democratic case for administrative and legislative devolution in Scotland is now overwhelming. We already have massive administrative devolution in Scotland. People say that it would result in an extra tier of government in Scotland, but we already have that in the Scottish Office, which has massive powers. All we ask for is a democratically elected Assembly or Parliament to take over those powers which have already been devolved.

The Labour party does not want to see the break-up of the United Kingdom, I certainly do want to see the break-up of the United Kingdom, but the Government's attitude, as has been expressed over the past week or two, could very well set us on this slippery slope on which none of us wants to embark. The issue has been debated by people representing my constituency for a long time. Perhaps the most famous of all was the great Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun who represented East Lothian in the last Scottish Parliament in 1707. He argued passionately, acknowledging the case for union with England, but he foresaw the anomalies and difficulties that would arise if one tried to roll two Parliaments into one. That case has stood for all those years and my predecessor John Mackintosh led the

debate on this issue in the 1960s and the 1970s. The case is more overwhelming now than it ever has been. Scotland will have its own Parliament. It is just a question of how we extract it from this Government or from Parliament.

7.16 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): At this stage in the Parliament it is inevitable that hon. Members from Scotland and from Wales should state their maximum demands. It would be foolish for the Government to declare their position at this stage. I do not go so far as my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox), but I agree with the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) that a degree of sensitivity is called for. I am quite certain that in practice that sensitivity will be forthcoming from Ministers in the Scottish Office and in the Welsh Office.

What cannot be claimed is that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has no mandate to govern. That could as well have been claimed in the days when there was an overwhelming majority of Conservatives in England and yet we had a Labour Government imposed on us because of large Labour majorities in Wales and Scotland.

If ever a Prime Minister has a mandate, it is this Prime Minister. Her unprecedented third election victory gives her the right to put into practice what she has been preaching. Nothing can now stop her from doing that, unless it be the practical impossibility of carrying out some of the things that we said we were going to do. I suspect that the proposal for a community charge may turn out in practice to be impossible to carry out. I suspect also that some of the proposals that we have put forward in education may also turn out to be difficult to achieve.

It is not open to the Labour party or anyone else to claim that the Prime Minister has no mandate. It is absolutely clear that there is no majority for any other party and no majority for any other set of policies. I am bound to say that it does not seem likely that any majority will emerge in the course of the next four or five years for any other party or for any other set of policies. Nothing that I have heard today suggests that there is any readiness on the part of Members in any of the minority parties to consider fundamentally what has happened to them and the need for a fundamental realignment on the Left if there is ever to be an electable alternative Government. That means that no commentator, no one in the press and no interested observer will take any serious interest in what the Labour party has to say. Constructive criticism will have to emerge from within the Conservative party.

With a majority as large as that which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister enjoys, she could safely ignore the doubts and hesitations of even a substantial group of her supporters. As her vision of Britain is so much clearer, even if it is harsher, than that of some more traditional Tories, she has every right to drive ahead. However, although she has every right to do so, it may not always be wise to do so.

Neither the feeble bleatings of the Opposition nor the murmured doubts of some of my hon. Friends are any real constraint on the Prime Minister, but, however great the majority and however emasculated the Opposition, the Government will not succeed in their radical aims unless they can carry at least the assent of the majority of the population. As far as I could assess the public mood in the election, it seemed that people were not alarmed by even

the most controversial of the Government's radical proposals, but they did not understand how they would benefit from them.

The Government face a difficult and important task in persuading people that their programme of tax cuts, incentives and privatisations will bring benefits not only to the thrusting and successful but to all the people. It is partly a matter of tone and rhetoric. All too often the Government's rhetoric has been self-defeating by alienating the support of those who should have been beneficiaries of our policies. We risk alienating a whole generation of young people if we are not very careful in the language that we use about training and benefit arrangements. We have already come close to spoiling our very good case in the dispute with the teachers' unions.

It is not much comfort to school leavers unable to find a job without going far away from home—and if they do go far from home they cannot find anywhere to live—to parents in inner cities where the only schools are dustbin schools, or to pensioners afraid to turn on the heating or having to spend all their savings before they can claim any of the innumerable means-tested benefits—all of whom have derived precious little benefit from our growing prosperity—to be told that we are to create one nation by giving people more freedom of choice. The concept of "one nation" involves rather more than freedom of choice. It includes the idea that I am, at least to some extent, my brother's keeper.

Of course it is right to insist on according overriding priority to wealth creation. To promise the distribution of wealth to all and sundry, as the Labour party did at the election, but with no believable explanation of how the wealth will be created, is quite simply fraud. The wealth must be created first. Even if some of the ways in which wealth is created—for example, in some parts of the City of London—is unattractive, never mind it is wealth which can be taxed.

If my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer can show that by cutting the top rates of tax he can increase his revenue—and American experience suggests that that is true—neither he nor our party should be deterred by Opposition charges that he is giving more money to those who already have plenty.

We need to find Conservative ways of steering as much as possible of our additional wealth towards the stimulation of new job opportunities, towards improved social services for all, towards more generous retirement pensions, towards better schools with better motivated teachers for all children, not just those of concerned parents, towards better health care for all in a better NHS, alongside an expanded private health service, and towards the renovation of our run-down inner cities. Those are tasks which Socialism, despite its fine promises, has failed to tackle. No party has yet come up with a systematic body of ideas for tackling them. I am sure that it can be done and my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) made a fine start, which is still remembered admiringly in Liverpool, by using limited sums of public money to trigger substantial private investment which sought commercial profit and brought benefits to many people in that city.

There is one area in which the policies of Conservative Governments, if not Conservative policies, have been enormously—one might say excessively—successful in attracting savings. The immensely expensive mortgage relief has boosted house purchase. In electoral terms at

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

least, those policies have been extremely successful, even if the main effect has been to push up house prices to absurd levels. There may be lessons to be learnt which could be applicable to health and education.

In the absence of a coherent and fully worked-out body of Conservative thinking to point the way towards using increases in national wealth to bring tangible benefits for all, we shall have to make increased use of practical experiments. Where better to carry through such an experiment, with good chances of success, than in Wales?

I rejoice in the appointment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) as Secretary of State for Wales. What is more, I believe that the Opposition, once they have delivered themselves of their ritual incantations about an English Member in the Welsh Office, will come to welcome him, if only to themselves.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales can, should and will carry through a major operation of recovery in Wales, making full and imaginative use of instruments such as the Welsh Development Agency, Mid-Wales Development, the Tourist Board for Wales, the water authority, WINvest and other bodies to achieve a mix of public and private enterprises which will be of immense benefit to all the people of the Principality. I believe that Wales faces a period of great excitement and hope, and I shall be privileged to give my right hon. Friend all the enthusiastic support that I can.

7.27 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The fact that we are discussing the contents of a Tory programme which promises 17 Bills in the next 15 months is deeply disappointing. It is not disappointing primarily to Labour Members, who will be back in hand-to-hand combat with the Tories, going through every piece of their legislation line by line. We shall be fighting the real 102 damnations—the Tory majority. The really disappointed people are those whom Labour Members represent—the millions of men and women, the young, the unemployed and the one in three people who live on or below the poverty margin. The past eight years have been a nightmare for those people and we now have to discuss the prospect of more attacks on their living standards, communities, councils, trade unions and all the bodies that they set up to protect themselves and their families.

I issue a warning to the Government. They think that they have been given a mandate to complete what, according to an editorial in *The Daily Telegraph* on 11 May, is

“Unfinished Business: The Welfare State.”

The Government should remember that elections are a snapshot of the moods, hopes and aspirations of people on a single day. Life is a movie. Thursday 11 June was an opinion poll writ large, reflecting the views of people on that single day, having been affected by four weeks of campaigning and the hysteria of the gutter press and the artificial boomlet that the Chancellor of the Exchequer engineered. That boomlet will soon peter out.

Nothing in the Queen's Speech will change the underlying weakness of the British economy. All the pre-election carrots, including the minimal tax cuts and other minor concessions in the months before the election, will turn rotten when the chill economic winds of recession

begin to hit the British economy in the next 12 to 18 months. [Laughter.] There is some laughter on the Tory Benches, so I shall start by quoting the predictions by one or two of their own people. During the debate on the last Queen's Speech I sat through a speech by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). He said:

“But the decline of Britain's industrial base is not measured in the lifetime of this Government or of the previous one. Britain's industrial base has been declining relatively for most of this century. If one considers the statistics that matter—the share of the world's manufactured trade which Britain enjoys—they show that relentlessly, regardless of which Government are in power and regardless of policies and economic regimes, there has been a persistent decline in our share of world trade in manufactures.”

A few minutes later the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) said:

“The decline in oil production and the trends in trade in manufactures will ensure, by one route or another, that we enter a new era of economic decline possibly combined with renewed inflation . . . There will be a nasty crisis in the next Parliament . . . dealing with it . . . will be a difficult and unpleasant task.”—[*Official Report*, 18 November 1986; Vol. 105, c. 482-500.]

I have still not worked out what he found particularly pleasant about the last eight years. That time may have been pleasant for Ministers or ex-Ministers on the best part of £1,000 a week, but it was not a pleasant time for men and women in low-paid jobs, for the long-term unemployed, for those in decaying council housing or for young people leaving school with no prospect of a job. The last eight years have been described by the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham as the pleasant part of a decade. The next two or three years will be conditioned by what happens internationally. They will be determined by the recent trade conflicts between Britain and Japan or by the recent three-cornered conflict between Japan, Europe and America.

The indications are that we are on the eve of a slump, a turning point in the world's economy. I am not the one who is saying that. It has been said by bodies that Tory Members should regard as their allies, such as the Bank for International Settlements which pre-dates Bretton Woods in its history of economic prediction. It said in a report that was mentioned in *The Guardian* of 17 June:

“How can overall demand in the world economy be sustained at a time when the US fiscal stance is being tightened? How can further protectionist pressures be resisted if the US payments deficit, and the counterpart surpluses, are not reduced? How can the debtor countries hope to export enough to service their debts without sufficient growth in the industrial countries?”

The present deterioration in growth prospects in the main surplus countries is no less worrisome, however, when viewed from inside . . . Unemployment is now becoming a major issue in Japan, for the first time since the second world war.

The most painful headache remains the intractable United States current account deficit, which reached \$140 billion last year. . . .

Two days later *The Guardian* reported that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, supposedly the unified body for the 24 richest capital countries in the world, said:

“The world economic situation has deteriorated in recent months and there is a risk that worsening performance could intensify unless there are policy changes in the major countries, according to the authoritative Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in a report published yesterday.”

The Guardian says that in Britain's economy the OECD . . . foresees a slowdown to 2.25 per cent. next year with a rise in inflation to 4.25 per cent. . . .

On the world economy, the report warns that 'slow growth, unemployment and large payments imbalances are likely to persist' and that the recent fall in the dollar, despite unprecedented interventions in the foreign exchange markets had led to rising expectations of inflation and higher interest rates in the United States.

These developments, together with growing tensions in international trade relations and continuing debt problems, have increased the risks of a worsening world economic situation.

Yesterday *The Guardian* said:

"US plunges deeper into the red."

The Bank for International Settlements was talking about the problems of a deficit in the US budget of \$140 billion. *The Guardian* now said:

"The United States plunged deeper into debt last year when commerce department figures yesterday showed a doubling of its foreign debt to \$263.6 billion. The American economy, which slipped into debtor status in 1985 for the first time since 1914, is now by far the world's biggest debtor."

American debt outstrips that of the next three most debt ridden countries combined. Brazil is the Third World's biggest debtor at \$108.8 billion. Throw in Mexico's \$101.6 billion and Argentina's \$51 billion and US debt still leads the world."

I was always taught or I learned or read that when the United States economy catches a cold Europe, and Britain in particular, catches pneumonia. The forecasts that I have outlined are the harbingers of the next 12 to 18 months of what will happen internationally in the world capitalist economy. It will bring to Britain and especially to our manufacturing industry a deeper recession than the recessions that occurred in 1979-81 or in 1973-75.

It may be of interest to Tory Members who find the health of their capitalist economy so amusing to know that the OECD predicts the dropping of growth rates this year in the 24 richest capitalist economies from 3.25 to 2.25 per cent. According to *The Economist*—I have picked magazines and newspapers that Conservative Members may read—that represents \$100 billion of lost output, the equivalent of Belgium being drowned in the North sea. That such a downturn in the world capitalist economy and all the problems that it would bring for the economy and for working people provokes humour on the Tory Benches, says a lot more about Conservative Members' cavalier attitude to the problems of working people than the fine words of the Queen's Speech could ever do.

The hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) made a laughable attempt to talk about the strength of the British economy. I shall give him a quote that he can read when he looks to see what happened in the Chamber after he spoke. In the *Birmingham Post* of 26 May it was reported that the Association of British Chambers of Commerce said:

"Over one in five manufacturing companies expect recruitment in the next three months".

That was headlined in the *Birmingham Post* as

"Good news for the jobless".

The corollary to that sort of assessment is that nearly four in five manufacturing companies or factories in the west midlands do not expect to see a growth in recruitment in the next few months. The same statistics were given for investment in plant and machinery in those factories. That was described as the

"most optimistic survey in the last 18 months".

For the interest of those who are prepared to listen, I shall repeat the key statistics from the record of this Government. Manufacturing production is 10 per cent. lower than it was in the peak of 1973 and investment in factories is 25 per cent. lower than it was in 1979. For the

first time since the days of Queen Elizabeth I this country became a net importer of manufactured or semi-manufactured goods. Britain was once known as the workshop of the world, but the Government have turned it into the warehouse of the world.

The problems arise not as a result of shortage of money for investment but because, having lifted the exchange controls in 1979, the Government allowed that money to flood abroad. Some £100,000 million of wealth created by working people in Britain is chasing the super exploited labour in countries like South Africa, Brazil, Korea and Argentina. What is £100,000 million between friends? I shall tell the House what it could have done for working people in Britain. It represents 1,000 brand new hospitals the size of the Walsgrave hospital in Coventry. It represents 7,000 brand new comprehensive schools or 750,000 three-bedroom family council houses with gardens at the front and at the back. That is what the working people of Britain have sacrificed in the last eight years because of the profits chased by the fiscal psychopaths in the City of London who look for the next killing in terms of where to invest the profits stolen from working people. Working people have never controlled that wealth, and the Queen's Speech alters that by not one jot or tittle.

It may be that those in the City of London on the best part of £500 an hour in the top reaches of the merchant banks and dealing in the various forms of stock exchange swindles in the casino economy of the square mile were swilling champagne when the election results were announced. No doubt they will welcome the Queen's Speech, particularly those parts that offer new killings like the proposed privatisation—were it to go through—of the water authorities and of parts of council and health authority budgets. The 17,000 new millionaires created in the past eight years of the Tory Government may welcome those aspects of the Queen's Speech, but a more sober assessment has been made internationally by those with real money about the prospects of the British economy and the fragility of the economic and social position of Britain under a Conservative Government.

Before the election, everybody was telling us that a Conservative win would result in billions of pounds of foreign money flooding into the economy, investing in the success of a Tory Government. Where has it all gone to? Not even a trickle of foreign money has come in, because those with money internationally can recognise what the next 12 or 18 months will mean.

Tory Members may think that 102 is a stable majority. I will remind them of what my hon. Friend and comrade the Member for Liverpool, Broad Green (Mr. Fields) said when he made his maiden speech in 1983, four years ago, immediately after the last victory by a Tory Government. He said:

"Despite the Tory victory on 9 June, we give fair warning that a large majority in Parliament will not save the Government when the true effects of their policies are felt by the British people. The Government of 1924 had a majority of 200. Stanley Baldwin thought that he could savage the living standards of ordinary people. Do the Tories now think that they can do the same, perhaps in a more brutal fashion? Baldwin's actions provoked the 1926 general strike. This Government's policies will provoke an even greater reaction from working people. Of that there is no doubt."—[*Official Report*, 24 June 1983; Vol. 44, c. 308.]

There was derision when my hon. Friend said that, but within eight or nine months of that prediction of the same reaction from working people following a Tory majority of 140 as that which followed Baldwin's majority of 200

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

there was a miners' strike which shook the fabric of our society over a 12-month period in a way that it had never been shaken since 1926. I expect that in the next months and years the Tory Government will face a greater resistance from working people as the effects of their anti-working class policies are felt.

Do Tory Members really believe that tens of thousands of council tenants will welcome the selling off of their estates to rich speculators and watching, creeping northwards, the horrendous levels of rents that people in London are asked to pay? Grafted on to that will be the huge and widespread resentment that the effects of the Tories' poll tax—already seen in the election results in Scotland—if it were introduced in England and Wales and of the swingeing increases in local bills would engender among working people. Already in many large cities Tory support has collapsed and Liverpool, Glasgow, Newcastle and other cities have not one Tory Member of Parliament. I leave aside Scotland because the results there have been adequately covered.

That mood of resentment and anger will run wide and deep and people will not be bought off by the inadequate and paltry changes in funding for inner cities. We are already suffering from too much Thatcherism in the inner cities, not too little. Giving Coventry £3 million or £4 million extra for inner city projects after taking well over £100 million in the past seven years is like a mugger stealing an old lady's pension book and offering her 10p for the bus fare home. That money will be regarded with the same sort of resentment and treated with the contempt that it deserves.

Some £20 billion to £30 billion needs to be spent on repairing, modernising and renovating inner city housing, and those sums are way beyond anything that the Government have the intention of producing. The same is true of education and health and the crises that affect those two sectors.

Privatisation or opting out are not the answer. Britain's dilapidated schools need huge injections of cash, and there is no mention of that in the Queen's Speech. All we hear about for schools is delegations of budgets and greater autonomy. For example, a school in Coventry called Whitley Abbey needs not delegation of budgets but enough money to repair the holes in the roofs of the classrooms so that teachers and pupils are not rained on.

A backlog of over £500 million worth of school repairs must be coped with. One in three schools has a leaking roof, one in four has an outside toilet, one in five is overcrowded. They need investment and money for books, equipment and decent wages for staff and teachers, not the proposals in the Queen's Speech for greater financial sacrifice for parents already burdened by requests, begging letters, raffles and bingo to pay not for luxuries but for basic essentials such as books.

The same is true of health. The Government's claims to be providing more for health, backed up by the Prime Minister's oft-quoted phrase that the Health Service is safe in her hands, are rubbish. Her hands were not safe in the Health Service when she needed an operation, and nor were her legs. It is a joke to claim that the Health Service is safe in the hands of Tories. In Coventry, deliberate underfunding of the district health authority has led to a crisis of a £1.5 million shortfall in the budget this year, and the Tory-dominated district health authority is proposing

to close a city hospital, perhaps Whitley in the constituency of Coventry, South-East. The staff, patients, the working people in general and I, as their elected Member, are determined that the hospital will not become the 222nd hospital to be closed under the Tory Government.

The former Secretary of State for Health and Social Services gave some promises when he visited Coventry briefly during the election campaign. We now await the outcome of the new arrangements, and we shall see whether we shall get increased funding from his successor. The signs from new Ministers in the DHSS are, shall we say diplomatically, less than hopeful.

In the Queen's Speech is the disgraceful announcement—I take no pride in having predicted that this would happen if the Tories won the general election—of the removal of all rights to benefits for young people who refuse to take a place on the youth training swindle schemes that are not designed to be a bridge from school to work. The schemes have two purposes—to fiddle down the dole figures among young people, and to drive down the average level of wages for young people. We have seen a deliberate and malicious cut of £17 a week in YTS allowance over the eight years of this Tory Government, perfectly in line with Sir John Hoskins' plan when he was the head of a policy unit at No. 10 Downing street.

Even the concept of a bridge is crumbling. In the past 10 days in Coventry the city council has been forced to close three of the most popular YTS schemes because of a cut of over £200,000 by the MSC in its budget for YTS. What little hope there was supposed to be of YTS engendering in school leavers the idea that they had a bridge from school to work is turning sour as a result of the way that the Government have treated them. I warn the Government that the youngsters on those three schemes, the hundred thousand youngsters nationally who expect to be hit if benefits are cut, and those affected by the 14 other identifiable cuts in youth benefit since 1980 will not accept the future that the Tories have mapped out for them of mass unemployment or low-paid jobs with no legal minimum wage, prefaced in each case by cheap labour schemes. Increasingly they will be drawn to the Labour and trade union movement to campaign for Socialist change. As the honorary president of the YTURC—the youth trade union rights campaign—I hope to play a part in that process.

Before I finish, I want to refer briefly to two other points within the Queen's Speech that will be increasingly resented by working people in Coventry and others throughout the country. There will be resentment about the Government's policies in general.

The first point relates to the rising trend of poverty among those relying on supplementary benefit. Just before the election I had to deal with a case of a woman in my constituency who had no electric lighting for three weeks. She required £65 to repair the electricity ring main in her house. She went to the DHSS and was told to go away and visit a bank or building society to get a loan. I do not know what experience Tory Members have of life on the dole. I spent three years on the dole before I became a Member of this House in 1983. The idea of a bank or building society giving a single parent a loan is laughable. Every building society and bank that my constituent went to rejected her. Fortunately, one bank was prepared to put

that rejection in writing and once the DHSS received that rejection in writing they gave her the £65 that she needed to repair her electricity ring main.

However, for three weeks her 13-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son had relied on candles. Indeed, the daughter had to hold a torch so that the son could revise for his examinations. That is life after eight years of a Tory Government for hundreds of thousands of people in the midlands and for millions of people nationally who eke out an existence on supplementary benefit. Forty-eight per cent. of the cases dealt with by the citizens advice bureau in Coventry are now debt-related in comparison with 19 per cent. four years ago. That is what the past four years of Tory Government have meant.

If the cuts outlined in the Queen's Speech and in the social security legislation go through with respect to housing benefit, in Coventry alone 30,000 families will lose between £1.30 and £1.60 a week. I do not need to mention the suffering that will be caused by the other attacks such as the conversion from grants to loans when people seek help from the DHSS.

The second point that will cause resentment is related to the first and represents the other side of the coin. It relates to those people who work in the offices trying to deal with the problems of those people represented by Opposition Members—those people on benefits or in low-paid jobs. I refer especially to the civil servants in the DHSS and the Department of Employment. They are among the lowest paid and most exploited workers in the country today. Some 40,000 of the 150,000 membership of the Civil and Public Services Association are estimated to be claiming precisely the same supplementary benefits that they process and give out each day to the poor in their cities.

In some inner city areas—notably London—the turnover among those young men and women in their first 12 months after they have left school and taken up a position with the Civil Service in the DHSS or the Department of Employment is more than 100 per cent. They do not even last 12 months in those jobs given the stress and strain they suffer.

It is no wonder that the anger of those young workers is now reflected in demands for the escalation of industrial action by their union against the Government's contemptuous and contemptible offer of a 4.5 per cent. wage rise. Interestingly enough, that anger is also reflected in the increasing support given to Socialist candidates for high office within the union.

The Queen's Speech contains nothing for those workers or others currently engaged in an industrial struggle. For example, it contains nothing for the 70 medical secretaries in Coventry who have been on strike for nearly a month over regrading and the district health authority having its budget cut by the Tory Government. There is nothing for the 2,500 Massey Ferguson workers entering an industrial struggle against enforced and compulsory redundancies. What can be more ironic or laughable about the supposed health—according to the hon. Member for Moorlands—of the British capitalist economy than the thousands of Massey Ferguson tractor workers in Coventry who have been told that they will get the sack because they are producing too many tractors, yet last night on television Judi Dench desperately pleaded on behalf of all the aid organisations in Britain for ways to save the lives of the famine-stricken people in Mozambique following the earlier appeals two years ago made by Bob Geldof and

others for Ethiopia and Sudan? There is insanity in a system that sacks workers who could produce goods that could be exported to stop starvation and poverty in countries such as Africa.

This Queen's Speech will not dissipate the accumulated bitterness among the millions of ordinary working people during the past eight years. As the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* claimed when explaining the industrial action among Massey Ferguson workers, that "compulsory redundancy" notice became the catalyst for the explosion after months of frustration among those workers. There will be many more catalysts in the months and years ahead for this newly re-elected Tory Government.

The Labour movement outside this building will continue its traditional and honourable way of mobilising the discontent of working people through demonstrations, marches and industrial action to reflect the growing mood of anger of the working class. I am confident that Labour Members will play their part in the process inside and outside Parliament.

7.56 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): It would be easy to be depressed by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). He began his speech by referring to the carrots that the Government have offered over the years and he suggested that those carrots were about to go rotten. I would prescribe those carrots to the hon. Gentleman before they go rotten. He should eat them and he might then see in his darkness. That would benefit his constituents.

I sometimes have a nightmare in which I wake up one morning to find a Labour Government in control. What would the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East do for four years? Not one positive or constructive proposition passed his lips in the previous Parliament. The hon. Gentleman personifies the reason why there will never again be a Labour Government in this country.

However, I respect the fervour expressed by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East and I respect the people of the fine city of Coventry. This Government are not responsible for turning the United Kingdom into the warehouse of the world. They have not seen the manufacturing base destroyed to its present level. That has been caused by the mistaken policies of half a century of Socialism and centralism and uncompetitive industry over those years which allowed the import penetration of the manufactured goods that we used to make. Another cause has been trade union restrictive practices which compounded that uncompetitiveness. Indeed, the inflation that the Labour Government sought to use to solve the problems caused the erosion of our manufacturing base.

The first mistake that this country made in 1945 was to elect a Labour Government to continue central control through nationalisation. The second mistake was for Conservative policy to acquiesce to that for too long. Although I am a great admirer of the late Lord Stockton and so much of what he stood for, he was wrong in one important respect. It was the Governments who stole the family silver in the first place. That was his error of analysis.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on her third term in office and on her magnificent victory. In the Gracious Speech I particularly welcome the policies on education and inner cities. Many of us who now represent prosperous seats in the south of England have

[Mr. Robert Key]

done our time as candidates in inner city areas. I certainly learnt an enormous amount, which has been of great benefit to me in my present constituency, when I fought for election in Holborn and St. Pancras. That was a very difficult inner city seat in London. My neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson), in a most penetrating analysis earlier this evening, suggested that there are also areas of rural deprivation that we must address.

I want to spend a few moments discussing the problems of prosperity in our nation. Who would be a Minister having to tackle the problems which exist in the difficult areas and in the prosperous areas? A popular new book has recently been published called "Sarum", the Latin name for Salisbury. It says that it is a history of our nation, and my constituency represents in microcosm so many of the best characteristics of the the nation and some of the problems.

I welcome strongly the Government's determination to regenerate and revitalise the rural economy. I hope that high on their agenda will be a reform of the Development Commission and the working out of a new relationship between the commission and the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas. COSIRA is at the sharp end of so many of the rural problems, yet it is under-resourced and under-staffed compared with its parent organisation in London.

I welcome the tremendous support that the Government have given to the establishment of enterprise agencies. Later this month the South Wiltshire enterprise agency will be opened by the new Minister. That will represent a great step forward in the regeneration of our economy. I welcome the way in which my district council is starting to formulate a new industrial policy. It is no good having jobs, which we have, if there is nowhere for people to live.

I often say that Salisbury is between the devil and the deep blue sea. It is not the people of Swindon who are devils, but Swindon is the fastest growing town in the United Kingdom, and, indeed, in Europe, and that is a devil of a problem to solve. There is a planning application in for an extra 28,000 people to be housed, and the infrastructure consequences of that are enormous for a modest county such as Wiltshire. The developers of such a project should pay the infrastructure costs. I hope that the Government will move down that road which will relieve the tremendous burden which other parts of the county have to face when Swindon continues to expand.

The deep blue sea is represented by the Channel to the south of Salisbury and the prosperous towns and precious green belt inland. Those areas are seeking to slow down or stop development which has gone on too fast and that has its consequences for Salisbury as well.

Less than half the population of my constituency live in Salisbury; the rest live in traditional villages with declining village economies. Traditionally, agricultural jobs have been the mainstay of those villages, but agriculture has suffered from being too successful and too productive and now the traditional jobs are not there. The village tradition of church, school, pub and shop provide a good mixture, but, if we are not careful, we shall not have the young people to fill those villages and to keep those communities alive.

First, we have planning constraints. There is a lot of infilling of new buildings in our villages. There is too little land. There is often cramped over-development and the prices of the houses provided are too high. The price of land is the single biggest problem, and that is because of many of the planning constraints. Young couples simply cannot stay in our villages.

Another important point is that almost a third of the jobs in my constituency are not in agriculture, retailing and distribution, the Civil Service or the Army, but in manufacturing. There has been a complete turnaround in the economy of the south-west and much of it has been towards manufacturing, not in large factories with large employers, but in high technology, manufacturing, subcontracting to big manufacturers—in everything from pipes for smoking tobacco to British Aerospace. Little factories are tucked away in villages, in a completely non-aggressive way, and they are providing nearly a third of all the jobs in the constituency.

There is no doubt that those wealth-creating enterprises of great diversity are the seedcorn of the future. Often, the farmers themselves are leading the way in creating new jobs in those areas. The future strength of our rural economy depends on such evolution. We must tackle the problem of housing just as enthusiastically as we must support the generation of new jobs.

The private sector faces the major problem of price in seeking to provide more houses. Young people want to buy their own homes. Of course, the rented sector has almost completely disappeared, which is why I welcome the Government's commitment to reform the private rented sector. I started my married life, as did many people, in rented accommodation. That option is simply not available to most young people now.

Salisbury district council has a well-managed housing stock and under its new management it is tackling the problems most professionally. But let us consider Salisbury and the problems faced by the housing managers. On 1 April this year Salisbury district council's stock of council and sheltered accommodation stood at 8,151 units. But no houses are currently available and only 2.6 per cent. of the housing stock became available for letting last year—that is, 261 properties through casual vacancies. Last year 190 council houses were sold, and the bulk of those were three-bedroomed houses. Of those, nine were bought back, being Reema system-built houses repurchased through the Housing Defects Act 1984. That Act is welcome but it was with some sadness that the district realised that it was allowed to spend in its housing investment programme only an additional £100,000 on those houses, not the £1 million that was needed. Last year 19 new houses were built and six houses were lost due to conversion. In all that, with a stable housing stock, the waiting list stood at 2,365. We anticipate that that will rise to about 2,900. The problem is the shortage of available housing.

Even with the best managed stock it is hard to make progress if many of those on the list wish to purchase their own houses, are willing to be responsible for their own houses but cannot be because they are locked in. In Salisbury city most of the families who are rehoused are priority cases. They are the only ones who can make progress, except by casual vacancies.

We have a special problem, which occurs elsewhere in the country, regarding the Ministry of Defence. The Salisbury area has a high concentration of the armed

forces. We welcome that because it is a major source of employment, but the homeless persons legislation requires that a person made homeless must be rehoused. Service men leaving the services apply to go on the council housing list and if they have employment in the area the district council is required to find them accommodation. Employment is not in short supply in Salisbury and many in the services were born in the Salisbury area.

Empty Ministry of Defence properties are not in short supply. As most are not made surplus to requirement the district council is not in a position to purchase them, even if it had the money, and of those offered for leasing the Ministry of Defence was only prepared in the past to offer a three-year lease. That is simply not cost-effective for the district council because so many of the properties need considerable renovation. Therefore, the council would prefer a five-year lease, which might be worth looking at.

Another real problem for rural housing authorities is that ex-service men can count their years in service accommodation for the purposes of discounts. The current rate for a house is 32 per cent. discount after two years' tenancy, plus 1 per cent. for each additional year in tenancy up to a maximum of 60 per cent. discount for 30 years. For a flat, the discount is 44 per cent. after two years' tenancy, plus 2 per cent. for each additional year up to a maximum of 70 per cent. after 15 years. That means that a service man, having been 10 years in, say, the Army and its accommodation, and then two years in district council accommodation, can qualify for a 42 per cent. discount on a council house and a 64 per cent. discount on a council flat. That is very good news for the services and I welcome it. It is right and proper, but unless we can increase the housing stock one way or another, once again we are trapped.

The district council leases another 30 or 40 properties from private owners, such as farmers or service men currently abroad, for low rental, short-term housing. That is an important but small sector.

How does a prosperous community such as ours in Salisbury, let alone communities elsewhere, solve its undoubted housing problem? We have the first Government for 50 years to question the relevance of traditional housing solutions, and I welcome that. First, Salisbury district council could build more council houses. It would need to build over 1,000 to absorb everybody on the housing list. But in Salisbury we have several large council estates and they are not the answer. Large-scale uniform housing schemes create as many social problems as they solve.

The private sector could and would help by building more houses, but it is constrained by structure plans, environmental pressure not to build in certain villages and conservation areas. Planning officers must make sure that the conservation policy of the council is not breached and that houses are not built. Above all, it is constrained by the lack of land on which to build and by the price of land.

Another solution might be the regeneration and the commensurate increased impact of rural housing associations. Rural housing associations are important, but they need more help. I hope that the Housing Corporation will receive a considerably increased budget, but that can only derive from the general health of the economy in the long run.

The private rented sector is an area of considerable hope in the rural regions. We all know of farm cottages that are empty because the owner dare not let them. We

all know of empty houses. If they can be brought back into the housing market, a considerable impact will be made on the housing shortage nationwide.

Perhaps the biggest message that we must get across in the prosperous areas of the south is that the countryside is not a museum. However, we must find the right balance. No one wants over-development, but we should not drive out our young people and discourage them from bringing up their families in the villages and communities where their families have often been for generations. It makes me sad that young couples in the village where I live are having to leave and seek council accommodation in Southampton because there is no accommodation for them at a price they can reasonably afford. Even if both of them are working, they cannot afford the mortgage or the price of the basic accommodation which is on the market.

The Government have given the nation great prosperity, particularly in the south. We must consider how to share that prosperity with the inner cities — which we must do, because we have deep consciences in the south about our prosperity, as we discovered in the recent election campaign. We must also look at the housing problems facing the prosperous areas and break the shackles that are preventing many people who want to accept the responsibility for housing themselves from doing so.

The Government should encourage the vitality and continued prosperity of the people of the south of England. In return, we will generate more wealth for the Government to tax and transfer to rebuild the communities and pride of the people of the north.

8.12 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): The sickest remark in the speech of the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) was that people in the south have a conscience. If they had a conscience they would have voted for a Labour Government and not returned this despicable Tory Government. They voted for their own pockets and against the interests of the people who live in the deprived areas of Scotland, the north of England, Wales and above a line which is creeping slowly south to the midlands of England. That is what the people of the south did and I hope for their sake that they do not live to regret it.

The speech of the hon. Member for Salisbury demonstrated the appalling ignorance of hon. Members who represent constituencies south of Watford and who believe that anything north of Watford is an obscure place in which the barbarians live for which they have little or no regard. That is what one expects from hon. Members from the south of England.

I shall not talk about my constituency as the hon. Member for Salisbury did, except to say that, perhaps more than any other, it typifies what has happened to the Tory party in Scotland. We won the seat of Glasgow, Cathcart in 1979 from the hon. Member who now represents Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). Conservative Members may find it worthwhile to read the article that he wrote in *The Guardian* this week about what he thinks is happening in Scotland. In 1979 we had a majority of 1,700. In 1983, with the boundary changes, the pundits said that it should be a marginal Tory seat with a majority of 2,000. In that year I doubled my majority to 4,000. In 1987, the Tory party fought no campaign in Cathcart because they obviously did not expect to win it back and

[Mr. John Maxton]

they were right. I now have a majority of 11,200, so since 1979 we have turned what was a Conservative-held seat into one of the safest in the United Kingdom. However, to put that in perspective, in the city of Glasgow Cathcart remains the second most marginal Labour-held seat. Out of 11 seats, the second most marginal has a majority of 11,000. The Tory party once held four seats in Glasgow. In 1979 it still had one left, but in 1987 it polled only 12.5 per cent. of the total votes in Glasgow.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will the hon. Gentleman remind us of the average electorate in each of those Glasgow seats?

Mr. Maxton: I believe that the average is about 56,000 people. My constituency has an electorate of 49,000 and I have a majority of 11,200, so in percentage terms my majority is larger than that of many Conservative Members.

The Tory party has been virtually wiped out in Scotland. Only a few Conservatives remain, such as the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), the Secretary of State for Defence. The Prime Minister said this afternoon that she was sure that, for defence reasons, the people of Scotland were glad that the Tory Government had been returned, yet the Secretary of State for Defence held on in his constituency with a majority of 182 votes. So much for the Scottish people approving of the Government's defence policy, when they nearly threw out the Secretary of State himself.

This Government no longer have a mandate to rule in Scotland. I shall explain that because Conservative Members have attacked the no-mandate argument. First, let me clarify the constitutional position for them. When they say that England has been ruled by Scots in the past they are wrong. That is a nonsensical argument, because constitutionally there are United Kingdom Departments of State and there is the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and the Northern Ireland Office. Constitutionally, there is not a Secretary of State for England, but there is a Secretary of State for Scotland. When I say that there is no mandate I mean that the Secretary of State for Scotland has no mandate on the matters with which he deals. I accept, although I do not like it, that with regard to defence, the economy, the macro-economic position and immigration, the Government have a mandate to rule Scotland, but for the affairs on which the Secretary of State has powers he and the Government have no mandate. They are in an absurd constitutional position. They have 10 seats left out of 72. The Government were wiped out and lost over half of their members. Even in the last Parliament they had no mandate in Scotland, but, having lost over half of their members, not only do they have no mandate; they are almost in a position where they are incapable of carrying out government in Scotland in the normal, traditional way.

When the Secretary of State looked for junior Ministers, he found that two Ministers had been beaten and that his Whip had gone as well. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) refused to serve and the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who had been thrown out of the Government 12 months before, refused to return. There was also the Secretary of State for Defence. Therefore, out of 10, three were out straight away. He was then left with

the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). He is an elderly gentleman to put it mildly, and obviously he would not be asked. That brings the number down to six, including the hon. Members for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). Those were the choices from which to select two junior Ministers and a Whip.

The Secretary of State selected his two Ministers, one of which was the hon. Member for Stirling. I must admit that so far in his public pronouncements in Scotland the hon. Member for Stirling has been reasonable and has sounded moderate. However, his public remarks as a Minister have been very different from the remarks he has made in the past as a Back Benchers very much on the extreme Right wing of the Tory party. In fact, the hon. Gentleman is almost much more of an extremist than my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). It is as if we in Scotland have someone like my hon. Friend in the Government.

I shall not comment on the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West. I am sure that all Conservative Members know him and know how effective he will be as a Minister. However, when the Secretary of State looked for a Whip, he could not find one in Scotland and went to an English constituency.

Mr. Key: At least he is a Scot.

Mr. Maxton: I admit that he is a Scot, but both my parents were born within what is now my constituency.

The fact remains that in order to find a Whip the Secretary of State had to go to a Scot who represents an English constituency. If I were the hon. Member for Tayside, North I would wonder what was wrong with me. Three positions were left, yet the Secretary of State was not prepared to give him one of them.

The Government therefore faced a major problem, but it is nothing to the problem that they now face in terms of manning a Select Committee in Scotland. That is essential. There is no reason why the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Office should not be put under the same scrutiny as any other Department of State. By the traditions of the House it would be normal for that Committee to be manned by Scottish Members of Parliament and for the governing party to have a majority on it. But with only five Back-Bench Members, it would mean that every one would have to serve on the Select Committee, including some who have just left senior office in the Government. In other words, the Government would simply be unable to ensure that the size of that Committee would be the same as it was previously.

That places the Select Committee in great danger. The Government and the House should recognise the constitutional position of the Labour party in Scotland and give us a majority on the Select Committee. That would then allow it to scrutinise the Scottish Office in a proper manner.

The Secretary of State will be unable to put legislation through the House of Commons. He will simply be incapable of doing it if he is to abide by the Standing Orders of the House. The Standing Orders state that 16 Members representing Scottish constituencies—not 16 Scots—should serve on any Standing Committee dealing with a Scottish Bill.

I accept that the Secretary of State for Defence, as a Cabinet Minister, will probably not be asked to serve on

a Scottish Standing Committee. That is a reasonable assumption. But that means that the remaining nine Scottish Conservative Members, including the Secretary of State himself, will have to serve on that Committee if they are to have a majority. Even then they would not have a majority that reflected the make-up of the House of Commons, and that is the constitutional position—that each Standing Committee shall have roughly the same balance as the House itself. A Committee composed of nine Conservative Members and seven Opposition Members would not reflect that make-up.

I do not see how the Secretary of State for Scotland will be able to put through any legislation whatsoever, and I fail to understand why the Government simply cannot recognise that they face a major constitutional problem arising from their massive defeat in Scotland by coming forward with proposals for a devolved elected Scottish Assembly. From their point of view that would make sense and it would ease the legislative burden in this House.

All non-Scottish Members moan frequently when they have to stay here after 10 o'clock to deal with Scottish business. The solution lies in the hands of the Government. We would be delighted if they gave the Scots an elected Assembly to deal with the Scottish legislation that is at present dealt with in this House. We would not then have to burden other Conservative Members as we could deal with such legislation in Edinburgh or wherever we decided the legislative Assembly would be. The introduction of such a scheme would seem to be plain common sense.

The Government will have to think again positively about this matter over the next few weeks and months. It cannot be put off, because like my Scottish colleagues I am constantly asked by the Scottish people, "What have we done to deserve another bout of Thatcherism?" As I went through Glasgow airport the other day two security people asked me that very question. These were people in employment. They wanted to know how we could stop the Government imposing their will on the Scottish people.

As my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said, none of us wants the break-up of the United Kingdom. We believe in maintaining the United Kingdom. But no Government can impose strains upon the now very delicate relationship that exists between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom without expecting a backlash from the Scottish people. They are expecting the Government to do something, and do something they must.

As well as establishing the Assembly, they could get rid of the poll tax. I gather there are rumours in one London evening paper tonight that the Government are thinking again about the poll tax for England and Wales. Be that as it may, it must be said that the Scottish people overwhelmingly rejected the poll tax.

I served on the Committee that steered that legislation through the last Session of the previous Parliament. Time and again we were told by the Minister, Mr. Michael Ancram—now gone—that this would be a popular measure and a major plank in the Tories' campaign in Scotland. We were told that it would bring back the dissident Tory vote because the middle classes would be better off as a result of the poll tax.

It is worth looking at the constitution of that Committee. It contained 11 Tories. Mr. Michael Ancram led for the Government. He is gone. Mr. Gerry Malone was the Whip. He is gone. Mrs. Anna McCurley served on the Committee. She is gone. So did Mr. Michael Hirst, and

he is gone. Mr. John Corrie served on it, and he is gone, as are Mr. Alex Pollock and Mr. Barry Henderson. Only four of those 11 members are left. I therefore advise Conservative Members not to serve on the Committee that will consider the poll tax for England and Wales, otherwise their chances of remaining in the House at the next election will be remarkably small. I am not a betting man and I cannot work out the odds but they really do not have much chance. The Government should listen to that. They should say, "We made that a major plank. We told the Scottish people that that is what we believed they wanted." The Scottish people have now said, "No, we do not want that thank you very much. We voted for a Labour party which stood on the plank of retaining rates." The Labour party won on that basis.

If there is any democratic morality left on the Conservative Benches, the Government should withdraw the poll tax as soon as possible. If they want to impose it on the people of England and Wales, they may take that electoral risk if they so wish. However, the Scottish people had the opportunity to vote on it and they rejected it. I hope that the Government will listen to that message and withdraw the poll tax as soon as possible.

8.30 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): It is interesting to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). He came dangerously close to referring to the Gracious Speech on one occasion. As he pointed out, it may be reckless for a Member representing an English constituency to demonstrate too great an interest in the legislative affairs of Scotland for fear of meeting the fate of the members of the Standing Committee. We understand what he said, but he should bear in mind that Members representing English constituencies, which in many general elections have been mainly Conservative Members, recognise the legislative right of the minority of Labour Members in England to legislate for the nation and we shall have the same attitude when it comes to Scotland.

Undoubtedly all Members of Parliament who have been returned are delighted to be back because it is a privilege and an honour to serve in the House of Commons, and to represent the historic and beautiful constituency of Shrewsbury and Atcham. However, at this early stage in my speech I must take my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to task. She has had lots of praise, justifiably so, from my right hon. and hon. Friends, but I must say that the weather during the election campaign was appalling. As she was responsible for the timing of the campaign she must take some responsibility for that. Representing a constituency that forms the county town of Shropshire and about 170 villages and hamlets around it, one of the pleasant aspects of the 1983 campaign was to get a pretty good suntan as we canvassed the country areas. The Prime Minister wisely went for a similar time of year and a friend of mine who is a consultant dermatologist, concerned for the state of my suntanned face after the 1983 election, gave me some cream to protect it but the Prime Minister had different weather in mind.

Here we are after a long campaign. Many of the issues that have been raised during the debate on the Queen's Speech so far were dealt with on the hustings and the nation has spoken with the historic return of the Prime Minister for a third term. Many people may feel that perhaps she is on the last lap but such a radical Queen's

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Speech has demonstrated that that is far from the case, that the Prime Minister is not out of breath and that there is much before us. The British people have undoubtedly endorsed that with the substantial return of so many Conservative Members. The Opposition's interest has been demonstrated by the fact that so few of their Front or Back Bench Members have been in the Chamber.

I was delighted to hear Her Majesty welcoming the visit next month of His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco. The British and Moroccan Inter-Parliamentary Union groups have good ties and undoubtedly the economic and cultural ties between the United Kingdom and the kingdom of Morocco have improved enormously and grown steadily. Morocco's ancient customs and great traditions find a welcome and warm acceptance in Britain and we look forward to welcoming King Hassan next month.

Earlier in the debate I was delighted to see my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) in his place. He has joined the team at the Ministry of Defence. There is a reference to NATO in the Gracious Speech and the part that this country plays in the Alliance, not least through the debates in this Chamber and the debates during the election campaign on the independent nuclear deterrent. I suspect that part of the reason why the alliance is reduced to such a rump in this Parliament is that eventually we got through to the British people the fact that 83 per cent. of Liberal candidates in the election campaign, including the one who stood unsuccessfully against me, were unilateralists. I thought that it was unfair of the British press, whether pro-Tory or not, to give the Labour party such a hammering for its unilateralist view while so many Liberal candidates got away scot free because the public were not privy to their beliefs about the defence of our United Kingdom.

Representing a constituency that manufactures engines for the Challenger tank, I am glad that our commitment to NATO on conventional weapons is unchanged. We are re-equipping seven Challenger tank regiments and those engines will come from Perkins Engines Ltd. in Shrewsbury.

I hope that many hon. Members on both sides of the House will take the opportunity to get to know people in their constituencies who perhaps serve in Territorial Army battalions, which are committed to NATO. They will be visiting Germany in October for an exercise and I urge hon. Members to take an opportunity to see the training that goes on for those part-time soldiers to enable them to play their part in the Territorial Army's enhancement of NATO. In that respect I am delighted to see that the Government are sticking to their course of Territorial Army expansion and enhancement and the 4 per cent. of the defence budget used for that is a sound investment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) who was sitting in his place earlier will undoubtedly have an interesting time bringing through this Parliament the revision of local government charges for England and Wales. One of the things I found a little strange while listening to the debate on the Gracious Speech is that hon. Members, especially those representing Scottish seats, are so keen to save us from ourselves. That makes me more than a little suspicious. If any of my colleagues had doubts about the wisdom of the

community charge I would have thought that the fact that we have been warned about it so many times from Scottish Members demonstrates the wisdom of such a course.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon that we must remind the ratepayers of England of what they were perhaps not able to appreciate during the election campaign—I am assured it was a feature of the campaign in Scotland—which is that in England and Wales we have had two revaluations of property levels postponed under this Government so far. If those revaluations by the Inland Revenue had been allowed to go ahead, the difficulties that the Tory party experienced in Scotland during the period of revaluation would have been brought upon us in England and Wales.

Mr. Maxton: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is aware that business rates will continue, even if it is to be a uniform rate. Before that uniform rate can be introduced there will have to be a revaluation of all non-domestic property in England, Wales and Scotland. I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that some of the businesses in the south of England will be screaming blue murder when they see what that revaluation means.

Mr. Conway: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. In fact, the uniform business rate will not necessarily be to the advantage of business men in my part of the world. However, what they accept and appreciate, being in a prosperous part of the country and having concern for the development of those areas of the United Kingdom that are less prosperous, is the need to help those business men in the parts of the United Kingdom who have suffered under extreme Left-wing Labour councils which have put up the rates to an enormous degree so that the job losses that occurred followed as surely as night follows day. We are well aware of the hon. Gentleman's warnings.

It is vital that my right hon. and hon. Friends remind the ratepayers of England and Wales about the scale of revaluation. If the last valuation, pre-1979, which has been postponed twice were to come into effect now it would bring a revolution to the Conservative party, one that I doubt we would survive.

As one who has spent 10 years in local government, leading a council group of 44 members, I believe that the community charge will give extra control to local councillors in budgetary matters. However, when we give the electors greater power over the actions of their local councillors and a greater understanding of their spending, it is equally important that we ensure that those local councillors have power over the budget. It is not acceptable for a Government to impose conditions on local authorities or for this House to put conditions, duties and requirements on local councils through our legislation, and to expect them to carry the can to their electors. If we are to give the power of control back to the ratepayer, we must ensure that the power of control over local finances goes with it, so that local councillors can account properly for themselves.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will be answerable for a sentence in the Gracious Speech in which the Government pledge to maintain and improve health services. I am looking forward to an Adjournment debate on Monday night on the financial position of Shropshire health services, and to reminding constituents in Shropshire of the enormous improvement in the financing of their health services, which increased

from £30 million in 1979 to £72 million in 1986. However, throughout the election campaign misinformation advised us time and time again that there had been a cut. My basic arithmetic suggests that a change in funding from £30 million to £72 million is far from a cut.

However, we have difficulties in Shropshire with a large and expanding population as a result of Telford new town in The Wrekin constituency. Our regional health authority is based in Birmingham and I believe firmly that it does not have any comprehension of the health conditions in Shrewsbury, in Atcham and in the rest of Shropshire. We are on the extremities of the regional health authority's geographical area and undoubtedly on the extremities of its concern. In fact, our county is 10 per cent. underfunded on the basis of the RAWP calculations.

One great thing that this radical and reforming Government could bring to this Parliament through my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services would be the abolition of the regional tier of health authorities, because it is a tier of money-consuming bureaucracy that does not provide any Health Service to the many county boroughs that it serves.

Those of us who have experienced the election campaign will have experienced again and again on the doorstep the issue of crime and law and order and the concern of so many people about the deterioration in the standards of law-abiding of our citizens. Legislation from this Parliament will not necessarily be the answer, although the concept of a national organisation for crime prevention, which was referred to in the Gracious Speech, will help rather than hinder. However the responsibility must lie with our magistrates and judges who must apply the laws and the powers that they already have from this Chamber. They should apply them with such determination that those who seek to do harm to individuals will realise that they are heading for a custodial sentence. Although we spent much time during the previous Parliament discussing the problems in the City of London—rightly so and regulations have been brought in—crimes of violence should be the priority in tackling crime, and the penalties for violent crime must be severe.

I wish that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary would consider an area of crime prevention which would come at as little cost as does, for example, the Territorial Army to the functions that the Ministry of Defence pursues, and enhance the role of special constables. They are individuals in our community who give up their time, without payment, to wear a police uniform to police our communities. During the conflicts of the miners' strike, for example, which consumed so much of the time of our regular police officers, who were protecting our citizens from bully boys, in many areas such as mine we were left with special constables to police the county town and the outlying areas. They did a splendid job. I recognise that many regular policemen are not keen on the idea of special constables. In fact, many Regular Army officers were not keen on the Territorial Army. However, that is undoubtedly a way to spread public resources to greater effect. I hope that we can carry through our policy of more bobbies on the beat by using special constables on housing estates and in the inner-city areas of our country.

I now turn to the agricultural references in the Gracious Speech, especially to the reform of the common agricultural policy. Various polls in farming newspapers suggested that the farmers of Great Britain were moving away from the Conservative party. I am delighted that

when the election was held that was proved not to be the case. Although many farmers have had justifiable cause to be displeased with some of the actions of my party during the previous Government—indeed I have felt unable to support it on every occasion in Divisions on agricultural debates—the farmers are loyal and have stayed with the Conservative party. They appreciate the changes that need to come in agriculture. They recognise that changes must come but ask the Government to take account of the fact that nature is their raw commodity. It is unacceptable for politicians in this Chamber or elsewhere to wander blindly through the Lobbies bringing in measures which rapidly affect sectors such as the dairy industry, but which take no account of the need of our primary source of food supply to change with nature. The farmers in my constituency and, I believe, in many other rural areas seek from the Government an understanding of the need for equity. I am delighted to see that in the Gracious Speech there is a reference to maintaining our "essential national interests". I do not believe that the British farmer asks any more than that. If quotas come, as they have been introduced on dairy products, we should like them to be equitable so that the British farmer is not taking a greater share of the cake than our continental competitors. We undoubtedly have competitors although we are all in the European Community. Our farmers understandably want to see an assurance on farm incomes.

Although colleagues from all parties in inner-city areas go on about the cost of the common agricultural policy, likewise farmers see the level of redundancy payments that are made to those who were involved in, for example, mining and feel that if they were entitled to such redundancy payments many small-holding farmers would be delighted to take them.

One of the good things about this election was that it endorsed the Government's strong stand against the two-tier pricing policy, which has been resisted again and again from Europe. It was supported unwisely by the alliance in the speech made by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) at Cirencester, when he embraced that policy so enthusiastically—with all the enthusiasm of his party for everything continental, and so very little for Britain—but the alliance was roundly defeated in farming constituencies because the two-tier pricing policy on cereals would have had a devastating effect for British agriculture.

If we join the European monetary system, I hope that, before we reach that stage, there will be a substantial devaluation of the green pound to ensure that British farmers enter that system at an advantage rather than a disadvantage. As one who served on the agriculture Select Committee during the previous Parliament, and earlier in that Parliament on a Standing Committee on industrial legislation, I should like farmers to be encouraged to diversify and to have similar access to Government assistance in terms of interest on loans and rates as they apply to industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), who is in his place tonight, is to be congratulated on joining the Government with the difficult responsibility that he faces. However, those of us who know him well know that he has the ability to give this country that which it demonstrated that it wants in education and will give parents a much greater say. In Shropshire, which, sadly, for the past couple of years has had a county council that has been controlled by an unholy alliance of Labour and

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Liberal councillors, a proposal was put forward which affected my constituency and which would have involved closing two substantial comprehensive schools, the Corbet school and the Church Stretton school. They were saved as a result of substantial efforts by the parents who were frightened that, at the stroke of a bureaucrat's pen or the endorsement of the council committee, those adequate rural schools would have been lost. Those schools have a good reputation for the education that they provide and are essential parts of their communities, but they would have been lost. The proposals in the Gracious Speech would give those parents the assurance that they need which is that the future of their children's education will be in their hands, not in the hands of the shire hall. I welcome that.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider carefully the minimum number requirement. In my constituency, for example, the same Labour-Liberal county council has proposed to close Acton Burnell school. During the election campaign my Liberal opponent wrote to the chairman of the governing body saying how much he supported small rural schools without pointing out that his Liberal colleagues on the county council had voted for the closure of the self-same school. People in rural areas are not so stupid and they gave him a resounding goodbye.

That school is too small to save itself under the proposals and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will reject the county council's plan to close it. If he feels the need to endorse the plan, I hope that he will feel equally the need to allow the children of those parents to continue at that school. As I understand the proposals, at present that would not be the case and I hope that there will be some room for movement. It will undoubtedly be a difficult fight but, as with the sale of council housing in 1979, it is deserving and must be pursued.

We went into the election with the general public understanding that we have a sound economy. The other options were undoubtedly thrashed and the so-called pact which was to lead to a hung Parliament and alternative form of government is now showing its genuine face, tearing itself apart as the two Davids demonstrate what unity was hidden at the general election. The ability of the Conservative party to deliver a programme was a major reason for success. We have a great deal to do and I am confident that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will get on with it.

8.51 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): It is my new privilege to represent Clydebank and Milngavie and to succeed Mr. Hugh McCartney who gave 17 years good, loyal service to the House and his constituency.

The Gracious Speech fails because it does not address itself to the major problem which faces my constituency and many others — unemployment. The Government believe that unemployment is best dealt with by market forces. In the policy for the Scottish Development Agency the Government states:

"the public sector should only be involved when the market alone will not produce the outcome desired by policy."

There is not the slightest sign that market forces will mean anything other than a two-tier Britain with a prosperous south-east and an impoverished north and Scotland.

The market is not sufficient and should not even be so for a party which calls itself the Conservative and Unionist party — a union of nations rather than of regions. A Government who tolerate a north-south divide do not merely threaten social cohesion, but risk political schism when the people of Scotland realise, as they do, that the Government do not have their interests at heart. They are indeed a foolish Government. When the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) points out the merits of bicycle riding, it takes on a whole new meaning when he wants us to ride to another country, especially when those on their bikes are likely to be the most skilled and entrepreneurial.

The market is not enough. My constituency has an unemployment rate of 16 per cent. That is about average for Scotland. It is deplorable when 16 per cent. unemployment is the average for a country. We have only 16 per cent. unemployment because, through the Scottish Development Agency — an instrument of Socialist planning that the Government realise they cannot do away with — we have an area initiative and task force which has brought 360 new companies into the area with a projected 4,000 jobs. The SDA expenditure has been £29 million, and its involvement has also brought in £25 million of private money.

If that can be done in Clydebank, why can it not be done elsewhere? The success of the initiative should persuade the Government greatly to enhance the SDA budget and its role, particularly to enable it to take a strategic look at Scotland's manufacturing industry. There must be much more sectoral planning by the SDA of areas such as the engineering industry. There is no sign that other developed countries are willing to give as low priority to manufacturing industry as the Government are with their over-reliance on the service industries.

Any success that there has been in electronics is welcome, although there are still significantly fewer jobs in high technology in Scotland than in the rest of Britain, and the 45,000 jobs in electronics are often part-time and only a fraction of the jobs that have been lost elsewhere in manufacturing. The SDA must address itself much more to the strategic planning and development role for manufacturing. At present only 2 per cent. of its budget is spent directly on manufacturing investment.

It is also ridiculous that an agency such as the SDA must cut its many other worthwhile projects because of the Government's failure to enhance its budget to take care of the one-off, large-scale Glasgow Garden Festival next year. Similarly, during the election campaign, the Secretary of State for Scotland claimed credit for Glasgow achieving the status of city of culture in 1990. He omitted to mention the complete failure of the Government to give one penny towards that event, despite its considerable prospective spin-offs for jobs and other means of enhancing the image of Glasgow. If the Secretary of State pursues previous policies, such as those on the Commonwealth Games, he will financially penalise the local authorities for their contribution to the city of culture and he alone will make a profit through the clawback of grants.

What else should the Government do? All of us who campaigned in Scotland could not help but be dismayed by the parlous state of much of our public housing.

Thousands of people are being cynically—I use the word advisedly—denied the right to a warm, dry house by the Government's refusal adequately to fund local authorities with the necessary capital. The Government are hoping that the condition of council housing will so deteriorate that people will buy or turn angrily on their councils. Then the Secretary of State will introduce a privatising "solution" to a problem which he has caused.

Clydebank is particularly savagely dealt with. The irony is that it has a massive housing debt stretching back to the need completely to rebuild the town after the blitz. That means that it has no resources for housing. Milngavie has another widespread problem. Because of the Government's failure to provide money to build council houses the sons and daughters of those who live there must move from Milngavie in order to find housing. Far more money must be invested in the infrastructure of our cities. Our roads, sewers and public buildings are under-resourced.

During the election campaign the Secretary of State was so out of touch that he boasted he would try to bring the A74 up to motorway standard. For years every Scottish resident crossing the border has experienced the national insult that the M6 stops precisely at Carlisle and is converted into the A74. For the Secretary of State to boast that the upgrading of the A74 would be his step forward shows how out of touch he is with the western side of the country.

With regard to the poorer parts of the country, the Government must abandon their strategy of imposing a low-wage policy, whether that policy is intended to depress the wages of youngsters or is an attempt to break up national pay bargaining in the public sector. It is an absurdity to tackle the poverty of the poor regions by taking money out of the pockets of those in jobs. That would represent a further downward twist in the economy of those areas with high unemployment. Once again one notices the sheer insensitivity of the Government.

The Labour party wants to maintain the unity of the United Kingdom, but the Government would aid the separatists by paying public service workers less for doing the same job in Scotland. One can imagine what the separatists would make of that.

Much more should be done to make it possible for the wealth generated in areas such as my constituency to be retained in those areas and used for the stimulation of further wealth. As an example, let us consider local authority pension funds. Previously, I chaired the Strathclyde superannuation fund, which is by far the largest local authority superannuation fund in Britain with resources of £1,800 million. However, to get the maximum return for that fund, it was necessary to invest in the economy of the south-east and the economies of Japan, Canada and elsewhere. It would make an enormous amount of difference to my area if a simple law could be passed which would enable perhaps 10 per cent. of that fund—£180 million—to be invested in the area by the local authority if it believed a return could be made. Such a return need not represent the largest possible return.

During the election campaign the Secretary of State visited a neighbouring constituency and took part in a photo-opportunity dressed in a police jacket. He was visiting a firm that was expanding, moving to another constituency and creating more jobs. That was commendable, but what the Secretary of State failed to mention was that the money that went into that firm came from the

Strathclyde superannuation fund. We managed to set up that firm with £5 million capital. It was only because of the failure of the orthodox banking system that enabled the Secretary of State to have that photo-opportunity during the election campaign. I view that photo-opportunity with some irony because the Strathclyde superannuation fund helped that firm when the orthodox banking system would not. The City has no interest in the good that money can do for communities such as mine. Profit is all that matters.

If the Government are concerned about unemployment they must abandon the absurdity of trying to create unemployment. I represent a regional council that is universally considered as moderate, sensible, well run and concerned with efficiency. None of its services is extravagant, and many are below national standards, but the Government state that the council is £54 million over their own fiddled guidelines. Such guidelines have been fiddled. If the Government had allowed Strathclyde to retain its share of regional services spending over the past few years, the council would have received £71 million extra. Instead, the money has been redistributed to areas that happen to be of a more Conservative flavour.

The Secretary of State must say why he is moving money away from the poorer regions if he is genuinely concerned about deprivation. If Strathclyde were to accept Government guidelines and cut £54 million in spending, 3,500 jobs would be lost. We saved the people of Strathclyde from that catastrophe. How can it make sense to move money into the inner cities while imposing restrictions on a local authority that is universally recognised as trying to do a good job in difficult circumstances?

Much more must be done to encourage the creation of local jobs. Many of our areas will not be helped even if there is an upturn in the economy. There are some areas, including the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), that have unemployment levels of between 30 and 40 per cent. Such areas will not be helped by an upturn in the economy. We need skilled, local economic development workers to create something of an entrepreneurial spirit in areas that simply have no local economy. To some extent that has been done in Strathclyde with the creation of Strathclyde community business and local co-operatives. Such bodies need more assistance from the Government because of the running-in time during which a firm is built up. One is talking in terms not of one or two years, but of five or 10 years.

The problems that I have highlighted could be greatly alleviated—obviously this will be a common theme among Scottish Labour Members—if we had an elected Scottish assembly able to choose its priorities and devise its solutions. One reason why the Government did so badly in Scotland was that their London-based campaign themes and posters had no relevance whatsoever in Scotland. I urge them next time to use McSaatchi and McSaatchi. The Government do not have the slightest idea about what happens north of Tottenham Court road.

The message of the Gracious Speech to the people of Scotland is that the Government will pursue their present policies, which promise only greater prosperity to the already prosperous people and the already prosperous areas. The people of Scotland have given their message: that all the people of this kingdom expect a fair share of

[Mr. Tony Worthington]

any wealth that is created. If the Government do not deliver on that, the Conservative party will complete its journey to oblivion.

9.5 pm

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington). I congratulate him on a most polished maiden speech. He showed none of the normal signs of the maiden—knocking knees, dropped papers and a dry mouth—but made a first-class speech. Undoubtedly we shall look forward to his further contributions.

I was particularly glad to hear the tribute that the hon. Gentleman paid to his predecessor. We remember him as a man who was interested in and knowledgeable about engineering. He cared greatly about the elderly and disabled, and also about human rights. The hon. Gentleman was right to point out the considerable service that his predecessor gave to the House.

Each Gracious Speech has charted a change in this country's fortunes. Rightly, the first two Parliaments have concentrated on rebuilding a country with effective defences and a strong economy, as well as increasing freedom in a variety of ways, such as with trade union reform, where there has been a restoration of democratic control to the members through compulsory ballots. Secondly, there has been an increase in freedom through a decline in state monopolies. There has been the denationalisation of British Telecom, allowing Mercury to compete for traffic and producing a better service. Those are just two examples.

I do not wish to dwell on past battles or past successes. I want to concentrate on a fundamental issue that was mentioned in the Gracious Speech. I refer to the best way of financing local government—whether it should be through rates, local income tax or a community charge, which the Government want. The issue is fundamental, and it matters, because the way in which a service is paid for affects crucially the amount of responsibility that people feel for it. The best guarantee of good services at a reasonable cost is to have an informed and responsible electorate, concerned about the services, aware of their benefits and costs and able to influence the elected representatives controlling those services. The two examples that I gave illustrate that.

In the 1970s some trade union leaders had reached the point where their ordinary members, the electorate, had little information and even less say about the conduct of disputes and negotiations. But the measures that we have introduced since 1979 have improved the flow of information and ensured that ballots take place before industrial action. I am pleased to hear that more is to come. Because of that, we have seen more responsible trade unionism. As a result we are being assisted in competing in world markets.

Similarly, with British Telecom, in the 1970s the ordinary consumer had no choice over equipment and found it pretty difficult to get any response on queries about service. Many of us will have held surgeries during which business men have complained, and indeed have been completely frustrated, about the long delays in

getting any service at all. Now, with denationalisation and deregulation, BT has become more aware of who pays the bills and the service has become more responsive.

Local government is a major supplier of services—schools, roads, housing, social services, sport facilities, libraries, police, and the fire and ambulance services. All of us are involved in those services at one time or another. It is in all our interests that those services should be run effectively, efficiently and economically, but because of the battle that the Government have had with some local authorities it is sometimes suggested that the Conservative party is in favour of everything being run from the centre. That is far from true. The Conservative party has consistently argued that central Government should do only those things that must be done centrally.

Since 1979, we have steadily removed the functions, powers and regulations that have accumulated over the years. We have abolished the GLC and the metropolitan authorities, thus returning to local authorities more functions and powers. Our concern with local authorities has been not to remove services but to ensure that the services that are supplied are run in the best possible way. As a country, and as individuals, we cannot afford to waste resources on inefficient or ineffective services. The wealth that we generate from industry, agriculture, export earnings and services has to pay for all the internal services that we enjoy.

The key to control lies in the method of paying for such services. If electors do not see a strong link between voting for increased expenditure and the consequent rising cost to themselves, they will have little reason to challenge the ways in which the services are run.

I want to examine in more detail how local authorities finance their services and how individuals, as consumers and paymasters, can ensure that those services are better run. First, the Government are allowing local authorities to spend £25 billion in 1987-88. Of that, 46.4 per cent., or £12.8 billion, is provided by central Government in grants that come directly from the taxpayer. It must always be remembered that high spending authorities are directly supported by taxpayers in rather more responsible authorities. Of the total £25 billion, 17 per cent. is provided by the non-domestic ratepayers—shops, businesses and factories. Only 11 per cent. is provided by the domestic ratepayers. Domestic rates are supposed to be a mechanism by which ordinary individuals bear their share of the cost of local authority services. For example, if they ask for more swimming pools and elect councillors who will build them they should be willing to meet the cost from their rates. Of course, that does not happen. It sounds fine in theory; in practice, things are far more distorted. Of 35 million voters in England, only 18 million—householders—are liable to pay rates. That means, for example, that a 19-year-old still living with his parents can lobby for increased services and vote for councillors who want increased services but possibly never see a rate demand.

Secondly, rates do not depend on the number of people in a house. An elderly widow whose children have long since left home may be liable for the same rate as four adults in work living in a similar house next door.

Thirdly, rateable values vary according to the precise location within a local authority and people living in different locations may use the same services but pay quite different amounts.

Fourthly, rateable values need regular revaluation to remove the distortions that creep in from time to time. Domestic rates are unfair and do not provide the essential close link between the consumers and service provision. It is people who use services, not bricks and mortar. Some have argued for a local income tax. That would not solve the problem. Of 35 million voters in England, only 20 million are income tax payers. Not many more voters would be involved.

It would also damage incentive by increasing marginal tax rates because high spending authorities would have to levy a local income tax which would push an individual's marginal tax rate up to 40 per cent. If collected by employers, it would involve them in considerable time and effort. An employer could have employees in three or four different local authorities or, in the case of London, in 10 or more. On the other hand, if it were collected by the local authority, it would involve them in complex income assessments, and that would be costly. I believe the Government have rightly rejected the concept of a local income tax. Instead, they are proposing a community charge—a locally determined flat rate charge, payable by adults.

The working of the system in the main would be straightforward. All adults would be liable to pay for the community charge in the area in which they lived. Most people have only one address. They would register there just as they do at present for the electoral roll. People with more than one address would register where their main residence was. Owners of two houses would obviously have to pay a flat rate equal to two community charges for the second home. There would be special arrangements for students and for the disabled. Owners of institutions or houses providing short-term accommodation would pay a collective community charge.

The system will be cheaper to run than domestic rating, for two reasons. Firstly, we will avoid the £30 million a year cost of keeping valuation lists, and, secondly, there will be no need for revaluation, which will save £65 million.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): It is broadly accepted that rates are the cheapest of all the taxes to collect. They form about 2.5 per cent. of revenue collected. Even the Government's figures show a substantial increase in collection and administration costs for this proposed tax compared to rates.

Mr. Sayeed: I take the point that my hon. Friend makes, but I suggest that he is leaving out the cost of revaluation. We have ducked two revaluations in England and Wales. If one added them in, the cost would be somewhat different. I would also suggest to him that the use of the electoral roll will provide the core of the community charge registration system and therefore will save considerable costs. The community charge will also be fairer because it will bear less harshly than domestic rates on low income households and, because many of the poorest households have only one adult, often a widow or a lone mother, it will therefore bear less heavily on them.

Also, low income households quite often are large users of local authority services, and so a flat rate charge per adult represents a better deal than charging at point of use. Those on low incomes will continue to receive help under the community charge, as they now do under domestic rates.

The community charge will bring home more closely to those voters previously unaffected by rate demands the cost of the services provided by local authorities. I firmly believe that people appreciate more the things they pay for directly. Services which appear to be free are more often abused or wasted. By paying a community charge, all voters will become more concerned to ensure that they get value for money.

The Government also propose changes in non-domestic rates and in central Government grants. For non-domestic rates, the Government recommend a new national non-domestic rate that will be uniform and that will apply to industry and commerce everywhere. The money collected will be pooled and redistributed to all local authorities in proportion to the adult population. That system has a number of advantages. It would remove the economically damaging variations in rate poundages, provide protection and certainty for businesses, ensure continuity of income for local councils and allow a radical simplification of the grants system. A national non-domestic rate would remove one of the major variations in rating circumstances, thus allowing a simpler system of grants which would comprise a needs grant and a standard grant. I believe that the system will be simpler and more productive than the present arrangements.

I believe that the proposed community charge will reinforce individual responsibility, lead to pressure for better value for money from local authority services and enhance local democracy. If we had had a community charge earlier, I do not think that we would have seen the worst excesses of certain councils, which have brought so much opprobrium on local authorities. Most councils provide valuable services in a perfectly sensible way, and I think that the proposed reform will help them to continue to do so and will force others better to serve those who elect them.

9.21 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I start by paying tribute to the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) who spoke with assurance and competence. As soon as I heard about his previous service on Strathclyde regional council, I knew that he would make a good speech. I am sure that we shall be hearing from him on many occasions and I look forward to that.

The Queen's Speech is the most disappointing that I have heard in my four years as an hon. Member. It offers no hope and no solutions for the problems facing Britain. It serves only to show that the Government will widen the rift between the north and south and between the haves and the have nots.

It was no wonder that the Prime Minister shuffled through her speech with ill ease. When she reached the section dealing with the reorganisation of schools not only was she ill at ease, but she waffled and clearly did not know exactly what the Government propose to do.

We must recognise that the country faces major problems. The hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) referred to the community charge—the poll tax—and I take the opposite view to that of the hon. Gentleman. In my experience in local government I recognised that the rating system produced anomalies. However, unless someone brings forward a scheme with fewer anomalies which is easier and cheaper to administer, it will be folly to change the present system.

[Mr. Peter Pike]

The community charge will create more problems than it solves. The hon. Member for Bristol, East said that some of the problems could be overcome, but I believe that he is over-confident. He spoke of the electoral register being the core of the community charge system, but many residents in many parts of the country do not appear on that register.

The Government argue that the area that I represent is an overspender. It is spending 64 per cent. above its target at a rate of £43 per head in the current year and its problems are compounded by a declining population. Our community charge will be more than double the current rate poundage. Rateable values in north-east Lancashire are extremely low. Therefore, while the rate in the pound may be high, the rates paid by the residents of the borough are relatively low. The overwhelming majority of the people of Burnley and, indeed, of north-east Lancashire and of many other similar constituencies will pay considerably more as a result of the community charge. Only those living in the most expensive homes will benefit.

I heard on the radio this morning a former Minister who is still a Member of the House but who in October was thrown out of the Government by the Prime Minister. He said that the community charge was regressive and took no account of the ability to pay. He spoke about many of the problems that exist. I hope that the Government will again give serious thought to the matter before they move ahead with a scheme that will create more problems than it will solve.

The Government say that people who do not pay rates are not making a contribution to local government expenditure. This Government pay only 46 per cent. in rate support grant for which people make a contribution through taxation in the form of VAT, income tax or other taxes, and rates on industry are part of the charges that people have to pay when buying goods or services. One way or another people are aware of the amount that local government needs to maintain essential services.

The Health Service is extremely important, but the comments in the Queen's Speech about the Health Service give me considerable cause for concern. The Speech says:

"My Government will maintain and improve the health and social services . . ."

I accept that in my health authority area of Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale the capital budget has been increased over the last few years. However, the problem is not with the capital budget but with the revenue budget, the money needed to run the new units that have been provided. It is quite unrealistic to provide new units if the resources to staff and run them are not there.

In my constituency there are threats to the future of Victoria hospital. While no decision has been taken to close that hospital, several wards are already closed and some equipment has already been moved out. When I went into that hospital during the election campaign, I found that in sealed off wards beds and other movable equipment had labels attached saying where the items were to go. In addition, there are threats to the future of Marsden hospital, which is also in my constituency, and threats to the future of Bank Hall hospital. The special baby unit is threatened, yet we know that St. Mary's hospital in Manchester cannot cope. As the secretary of the community health council said at a meeting on Monday, if we are not allowed to maintain that unit it will clearly

result in more baby deaths in the areas of Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale. The Government must give serious thought to that.

One of the crazy things in my area is that while wards were being closed we were able, as a result of the special allocation of money that the Government conveniently made available just before the election, to reduce waiting lists. Work was contracted out to Gisburne Park hospital which is owned by some of the consultants in our health authority area and in other health authority areas. They did not do the work on patients transferred from Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale but it was carried out by consultants from Blackburn and vice versa which was a good thing for the patients and consultants.

It also worries me when constituents tell me that if they want to pay to see a consultant and receive speedy attention they are told that if they pay cash they can get such treatment. When they pay cash to see consultants privately, even if they do so only for the first stage, they jump the queue and get the rest of the treatment on the Health Service. It surprises me that the consultants want to be paid in cash and not by cheque. I do not believe that it is because they think that the patient will not survive on the operating table and the cheque will not be honoured. I wonder why they have to pay cash. These are some of the doubts about where the Health Service is going. There are many problems and the Government are wrong to claim that they have protected the Health Service. They need to do a lot more.

Housing is a great priority. The Government must look at areas on a more selective basis, accepting that the problem in London is not the same as the problem in Manchester and that the problem in Manchester is not the same as the problem in Burnley. We have to have a housing policy that deals differently with the different problems of specific areas. One of the problems in north-east Lancashire is that property values are extremely low because we are losing population and have been for many years. Burnley has lost some 5,000 people since 1983. This means that we have empty houses in both the private and the public sectors and there is not sufficient money to deal with the problem.

We had a meeting with the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction to put these points the day after the general election was called. He said—and we understood—that he would not be able to give a response because of the change in the situation. We hope that his successor will send a reply. One of the main priority areas is sheltered housing, and we need to provide resources for that.

There are other problems in Lancashire, such as school buildings. The *Evening Telegraph* of last night said that there is to be a crunch meeting to discuss the future of the adult education centre run by Burnley college. There are problems with Stoneyholme primary school and we cannot build an urgently needed new primary school there. The Secretary of State for Education and Science came to see the problem in October last year. Burnley Wood primary school is closed and a new building is going ahead. These are the type of problems that we have.

It is important that we look at unemployment, particularly in the north-west. Under this Government, we have lost 32 per cent. of manufacturing jobs since 1979. Some 330,000 jobs have gone in an area that is heavily dependent on manufacturing jobs. As long as the Government permit the country to import manufactured

goods to the tune of £7.5 billion worth more than we export, we will not deal with the problem, and it will continue to worsen.

Another important aspect is foreign affairs. The Queen's Speech outlines the particular problems of the middle east and South Africa and I recognise the importance of those areas, having visited both of them. I hope that the Government will show that they mean business over South Africa. I believe that the Minister now in charge of South African relations will show the South Africans that the Government mean that they condemn apartheid and wish to see an end to that policy. Unlike many Conservative Members, I believe that she of all the Foreign Office team is most sincere in what she says. I hope that she will seek urgent meetings with President Botha and stress the need to end the present censorship, the state of emergency, and apartheid.

The Government have a lot to do. I hope that they will think again about many of the points in the Gracious Speech. I hope that they will tackle the problems and work for a united Britain rather than continue to divide it as appears to be the aim of the Gracious Speech as delivered today.

9.34 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): At the beginning of his speech the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) referred to the community charge. That topic will obviously be the flavour of the evening and I shall revert to it in a moment. However, before I do that I want to put on record that I agree with much of what is contained in the Gracious Speech, especially with regard to education and tackling crime. I very much hope that imaginative action will be taken over housing. Perhaps more than any other party the Conservative party is free of an ideological aspect and that allows us to consider a range of alternatives for rented housing in particular. Housing is the cornerstone for breaking the cycle of deprivation in the inner cities which leads to bad education, bad health and crime. If housing policy is wrong, it is very difficult to get the other aspects right. I applaud the Government's intentions and greatly look forward to applauding the specific initiatives as and when they appear.

It would be wrong of me in the relatively short time available not to concentrate on the area that causes me most concern in the Gracious Speech—the proposal for a community charge. Right hon. and hon. Members who were Members prior to the election will not be surprised to learn that I have the strongest reservations about the proposal, and I have made my view clear on many occasions. I must again remind colleagues, especially my Conservative colleagues, why the proposal for a community charge is misconceived. I shall consider the claims that have been made for the charge and try to explain why they are wrong. If time allows, I shall then say a brief word about the political impact.

First of all, the proposal was introduced as a way to increase local accountability. It was claimed that "everyone would be required to pay." In practice, quite realistically and properly, we have since concluded that those receiving supplementary benefit will be fully protected if we allow for differences in calculation of reimbursement. Of course those people must be protected. However, at a stroke, so to speak, we have removed one of the main struts behind the proposal. There was always a contradiction. On the one hand, the proposal was for a

universal tax, and, on the other, there is a necessary and proper protection for those most in need. The Government have rightly and properly stated that those most in need will be fully protected. That drives a bit of a hole in the first argument in favour of the community charge.

The second and unquestionably the major problem about the community charge relates to its administration. Of course it is early days. The Scots have yet to have the full benefit of the legislation.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): We have already had it.

Mr. Squire: Indeed, some might say politically that they have already had the benefit. When it is recognised—especially in inner city areas—just how difficult it will be to track down the mobile population, a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends will see the problem appear. Even in the outer London area that I represent—outer London, not inner London—I hesitate to think of the degree of mobility that exists, particularly among young people, on a month to month, or even week to week, basis. I believe that it will be an absolute nightmare to track down that mobile population. Even when those people are tracked down successfully, levying and recovering that money will be another nightmare that the Scots will be the first to experience. All that, as I pointed out a moment ago, is despite the fact that rates, whatever else is said about them, are by a street the cheapest form of taxation to collect as a percentage of total revenue.

That is not the only reason for having rates, but it is useful that domestic rates are cheap to collect. Anyone who was ever taught accountancy will know that the relative ease of taxation is one of the things to be looked for in an ideal tax. Sadly, the community charge does not come into that category.

Hon. Members, in particular my hon. Friends, will say that we must do something. That is questionable. There is nothing inherently unusual about a property tax. It operates successfully in many other countries. We can change the way in which it is assessed, but if it were retained we would certainly have to revalue.

The great fear that seems to strike politicians when one mentions revaluation is rather interesting. I was the chairman of a finance committee of a local council at the time of the latest revaluation. One might say that that was a fairly exposed position. The average increase was about two and a half times in valuation terms. For the first few months pandemonium reigned. But what happened? Eventually, people received a rates demand which, surprise, surprise, had not increased two and a half times, but, in most cases, had gone up by the same sort of figure as previously because it was adjusted on the poundage. There was no great arithmetical surprise there.

In Scotland the great reaction understandably took place, as I have already recognised, and by the time it subsided and the rates bills came out, demonstrating that there were a number of winners and a number of losers, the Conservative party had committed itself to a radical change.

If I were to stand here and suggest that we should run an income tax system on estimated incomes rather than actual incomes, I can assure hon. Members that I would be laughed out of court. Therefore, it is proper to suggest that we have a property tax based on a true regular

[Mr. Squire]

revaluation. If we are not going to do that, as I think we should, at the very least we should transfer over some of the nationally determined expenditures.

In *The Times* today Ronald Butt said:

"The bulk of the money raised by the poll tax will go to pay for what are essential services, education, fire and police, which are laid on local authorities by central government. But what is the logic of having these national services paid for by an inequitable flat rate when other national services (defence, for instance) are paid for by a graduated income tax?"

I urge hon. Members to consider those words carefully.

Let me touch finally on the political aspects of this issue. The Government's Green Paper states that a narrow majority of households would gain from the introduction of a poll tax. That does not clearly bring out the fact that the majority of the gainers are single adult households and the clear majority of the losers are households with three or more adults in them.

In an article published this month in the influential local government journal *PSLG*—which I commend to all colleagues to read—on a new study by John Gibson, it is pointed out that

"out of every 100 electors, there are 56 who live in households which will find themselves worse off under poll tax and 44 living in households where bills fall under poll tax."

Moreover, if one looks at the large gainers and large losers, an area which I am sure concerns many of us, the article says:

"The ratio is 62 large losers to 38 large gainers—and there are over 8.3 million electors in households with bill increases of over £100 a year."

I could say more. The article goes on to name a number of constituencies and councils where the increases will be substantial and I am sure that hon. Members who read this speech in the following days would do well to read that article closely to see whether they are in the hit list line.

When the legislation was being introduced in Scotland we were told by a number of our colleagues in Scotland that it was strongly wanted and would be—

Mr. Bill Walker rose—

Mr. Squire: I must finish this point, but I do not think that I am about to say anything with which my hon. Friend will disagree. We were assured by our colleagues in Scotland, to whom we listen on these matters, that it would be electorally popular. That was stated several times and it was given a fair wind.

Mr. Bill Walker: I want my hon. Friend to note that the results from Scotland were not the result of the introduction of the community charge. The results were the subject of many other factors, of which the community charge certainly was not one.

Mr. Squire: All I am saying is that the claim that it would be a vote winner has not been demonstrated.

I ask that that issue be borne in mind by my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench, because, with that exception, I believe that this is an exciting and challenging Gracious Speech which I shall have great pleasure in supporting.

9.46 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): We are coming to the end of the first day of the debate on the Loyal Address and we have had some very good maiden speeches. I refer in particular to two speeches that were made by hon. Members who represent the south Yorkshire

area—my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley). It bodes well for the House because they are both young men with a long future in this place and will certainly do well.

A number of matters have been raised concerning the poll tax. As to administration, how will the register be compiled? Who will compile it and who will be responsible for putting the name of the householder on it? If the person who is responsible does not put his name on it, will he be prosecuted? Will the demand go to one dwelling or to each person in the dwelling who is over 18 years of age? If it goes to the person who is over 18 years of age, the administration of the scheme will be so tremendous and costly that it will not be worth considering.

As to the effect of the poll tax on Barnsley, West and Penistone, on the Government's figures the average rate in Barnsley is £349.21p. On the Government's figures the rate of the poll tax will be £267. That is fine for people living alone, and there is no quarrel that they will be financially better off, but what about the old couple who will be paying not £349 but £267 each? What about the married couple with an 18-year-old son or daughter? They will be paying not £349 but £801.

Also, how will the water and sewerage rate be calculated? Will it be calculated on the poll tax rate or will it be a metered charge? If it is to be metered, what notice will we give the water authorities? The authorities will make a profit out of water when they are privatised by putting in meters. The Government cannot introduce a poll tax and be fair to the people not only in the collection but in the administration of it.

Farmers in my constituency are very worried. I said in 1979 and in 1983 that 20 per cent. of them would go bankrupt. In 1987 I have changed my mind, because 40 per cent. of them will go bankrupt. Their farm machinery has come to the end of its life and the charges on that machinery will be so prohibitive that they will not be able to use it and they will go bankrupt. There is a need for a system of capital grants for farm machinery. If they go into forestry they will need help because there is a 20 year lead in before it starts to give a return. All these factors must be looked at.

With regard to milk quotas, I see no reason why the owner of the land should have the milk quota or a share in the milk quota when it is the tenant farmer who has produced it.

Those are the issues that we found on the hustings concerned many people.

The Government are making a ridiculous proposal when they say that they will take schools out of the state system. Councils are having problems trying to rationalise schools because of the falling rolls. They are having to rationalise because of Government policy. Local authorities are trying to balance bricks and mortar with the numbers of children. The Government are proposing to take them out of the state system, upsetting the balance completely.

If I were a parent whose child attended a school that was due to close, I would vote to take it out of the state sector. There would also be the question of raising money to keep the school in being, because, regardless of what they say, the Government know that a parental contribution will be required to keep schools going as independents. That is the ridiculous situation into which the Government are dragging us.

It is time that the Government were honest and forgot all about the poll tax. They should come forward with a proper and equitable rating system instead of trying to push through the poll tax. It is definitely unwanted in Scotland, and, as far as I am concerned, it is certainly not wanted in Yorkshire. If there is to be devolution for Scotland, we should go for devolution for Yorkshire as well.

9.51 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): This debate on the Gracious Speech gives me the opportunity to say how proud and privileged I am to have been re-elected as the Member of Parliament for Basildon. It came to my attention both before the election and during it that a number of political pundits had forecast that I would lose my seat. I believe that Joe Coral was running a book on it.

I think I am entitled to give a reason why we retained the Basildon seat. Some of the pundits had obviously looked at the local government election results in 1983. At that time, four weeks before the general election, I lost my one Conservative councillor and we polled just 26 per cent. of the total vote. Again in 1987, no Conservatives were elected to the local council, and we got 24 per cent. of the total votes cast. Nevertheless, I was re-elected Member of Parliament for Basildon and actually doubled the majority, because when the people of Basildon went to cast their votes and looked at what the Opposition parties were offering, they obviously decided that it was precious little.

The debate on today's Gracious Speech highlights precisely why the Conservatives won the election. Never before have I heard such an ungracious speech as the one delivered by the Leader of the Opposition. I am personally delighted to have heard what the right hon. Gentleman said, because clearly he has learnt nothing from what happened during the general election campaign. There was no substance whatever in what he said.

The nonsense of romanticising about the 1930s and 1940s makes me despair, because many Opposition Members were not politically active during that time. This is 1987, and we must live in the present. We must modernise our policies. I am talking not about Victorian values but about the world situation in 1987, and it is absolutely clear that the Opposition parties have learnt nothing and that there was no substance behind their rhetoric.

I welcome the idea of the community charge. In 1983 I made my maiden speech on the then Rates Bill. I know better than most hon. Members of the damage that an irresponsible rating policy has on the local community, because that is precisely what has happened in my constituency. The rates system in Basildon is an attack on widows, widowers and pensioners. It is grossly unfair. I therefore welcome the concept of the community charge which I believe will be much fairer.

My colleagues should not fall into the trap of referring to a poll tax. It is not a poll tax.

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Gentleman should be careful about what he is saying if he expects to make any headway in his career. The Prime Minister described it as a poll tax in relation to Scotland before the election.

Mr. Amess: I stand by the statement I have just made. It is not a poll tax and I urge my colleagues not to fall into

the trap of calling it a poll tax. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition or any of his supporters to introduce a Bill to make voting compulsory. They know only too well that they would not do that. The turn-out in the general election was 75 per cent. on average and in the local elections it was 50 per cent. Therefore, we will not have any nonsense about the community charge having anything to do with a poll tax or putting a price on democracy. Conservative Members are certainly the upholders of democracy in this country and the conduct of Opposition Members undermines democracy.

Mr. Norman Hogg: In Scotland?

Mr. Amess: Opposition Members keep mentioning Scotland. I am not prepared to get involved in that, other than to say that my next door neighbours are Scottish and I do not know what I would do without them.

Mr. Pike rose

Mr. Amess: The community charge will be a much fairer system and will turn out to be a vote winner. High rates destroy jobs. On current spending estimates the business community in Basildon will have a rate reduction of about 9 per cent. On average, each ratepayer in Basildon pays about £300 per person and on current spending levels it would be reduced to about £230.

Mr. Nellist: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to continue to make the assertion that high rates destroy jobs, will he explain to the House why virtually every survey conducted by business organisations on the reasons for redundancies and plant closures do not mention rate rises but always mention interest charges?

Mr. Amess: I am sorry, that is not true. When I was elected to the House there was the closure of Carreras Rothmans with a loss of 1,000 jobs. Part of the reason for its decision to transfer to Spennymoor was the fact that its rates bill in Basildon was £750,000. I am sorry, I do not agree that high rates do not destroy jobs. Anyone who knows anything about running a business knows that the smaller the business unit, the more concern one has about the level of rates.

Five weeks ago in Basildon the Labour party lost control of the local authority. It is now a hung council. Neither of the two other parties will take control of the council because over the next few months the people of Basildon will hear a horrific story about the extravagance of the former Labour administration. It was noticeable that when the Opposition environment spokesman came to Basildon he said specifically that if there were to be a Labour Government he would not bail out the then Socialist-controlled Basildon district council.

I welcome the fact that we are to continue with the measures in the Criminal Justice Bill. It is essential that we get on the statute book the review of lenient sentences. We note with interest that the Opposition in the previous Parliament voted against the review of lenient sentences. I welcome the provisions on housing. Conservative Members believe that much more should be done to open up the rented sector. I welcome also the Government's intention to introduce a blank tape levy.

I should like to express my disappointment that there was no mention in the Gracious Speech of legislation concerning the Warnock report. If this Parliament is not concerned about life, I do not know what we are concerned about. I understood that we were to have legislation on the

[Mr. Amess]

Warnock report. As medical science advances, the age at which a premature baby can survive once it is born is reducing all the time. It is essential that Parliament has the guts and the courage to take a decision on that.

Some months ago, in the other House Bishop Montefiore introduced a Bill relating to this. I was delighted that the Government dropped their neutral stance and said that they would support the Bill. We have a right to introduce legislation on such measures to give further protection to life.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Primary Health Care Services

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn. [Mr. Boscawen.]

10 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for selecting my subject for debate tonight, especially as this is the first Adjournment debate in the new Parliament. The only other first that I have achieved in this House was to be the first Back Bencher to be called after the then Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), when he sat down following his spontaneous reaction to the Budget statement a few years ago. I am a little better prepared for this occasion, because I have been seeking this debate since the new year.

A year ago, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler), then the Secretary of State for Social Services, announced to the House the first comprehensive review of our primary health care services since the NHS was established in 1946—over 40 years ago. Those are the services that people contact first for health treatment and advice. They represent more than 90 per cent. of the contact that people have with the NHS. They include family doctors, dentists, pharmacists, opticians, health visiting and other community health services, and they are used by more than 1 million people on an average working day.

It is accurate to say that by and large people remain satisfied with the services. They may object to matters that are outside the control of the practitioners, such as prescription charges and hospital waiting lists, but those matters are outside the scope of this review. Certainly, during the nearly 10 years that I have been a Member of the House, I have received few complaints from constituents about local primary health care services. I represent a constituency with one of the highest proportions of elderly people in the country, and the demand for such services is therefore high. It is also true to say that one of the characteristics of the British people is to put up with inadequacies and inefficiencies without making a fuss or complaining. I suspect that that applies especially to elderly people, particularly if it concerns those upon whom they rely when they are ill.

By any standards, a review of our primary health care services was long overdue. The past 40 years have seen a revolution in medical technologies and treatment, as well as in social developments and changes in patients' expectations. The great advances in information technologies should, in themselves, offer new opportunities for a more effective and economic service. However, none of those advances can or should substitute for that personal touch, a private period of communication between practitioner and patient, which is such a valuable source of comfort and cure in itself. If there is one consistent complaint against family doctors, it is that that personal relationship is no longer always to be found. People complain that early appointments are hard to obtain and that the conditions and procedures in some waiting rooms leave much to be desired.

I cannot judge how much that dissatisfaction about the lack of communication is contributing to the growing interest in alternative medicines. A recent British Medical Association report on alternative medicines noted that

such practitioners devote on average eight times longer to a consultation than the average general practitioner and that

"there can be little doubt of the appreciation and gratitude of most patients for a long, detailed and sympathetic examination by a physician."

I am impressed by the considerable feedback I have received from my constituents which suggests that they are finding relief and cures from alternative medicines when conventional treatment appears to have failed. I have campaigned for several years of this issue and the time is long overdue for alternative and complementary medicines to be impartially investigated and properly recognised by the NHS with the long-term aim of being included within it.

I regret the negative and professionally prejudiced attitude of the BMA's report last year, especially towards chiropractic, the professionalism and competence of which I have come to respect through having the Anglo-European College of Chiropractic in my constituency. The BMA report's conclusions challenge the experience of many of my constituents as well as contradicting what a growing number of GPs are recommending and, indeed, practising. I look forward to learning from my hon. Friend tonight of a more positive attitude by the Government towards alternative medicines.

As the House knows, as part of his review of primary health care services my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State published a discussion document as a basis for extensive consultation. It contained several ways of achieving his twin objectives of raising standards of care and making services more responsive to the needs of the public. The consultation period ended on 31 December 1986. One reason why I sought the debate was to provide an opportunity for the House to learn of the progress of that review. It also provides an opportunity for me to record the results of my consultation with those who practise in my constituency.

The House may be interested to learn that in response to my right hon. Friend's call for a wide debate I invited most of the NHS doctors, dentists and pharmacists in my constituency to attend several meetings to discuss the proposals affecting them. I gave each of them a questionnaire to complete and return, which most of them did.

To encourage what it calls "better practice", the Green Paper suggests that the system of payment to doctors should better reflect the services they provide and the number of patients on their lists. First, I asked my doctors whether they accepted the principle of introducing a good practice allowance into the system of payment to general practitioners. I found them evenly divided. Many felt that it was more appropriate to penalise bad practices, while some wanted a genuine effort to help poor performers to improve their facilities rather than to be fined for practising in areas of particular difficulty.

The vast majority of my doctors agreed that better information about practices should be made available to the public, although to allow them to advertise was not generally thought applicable in areas such as Bournemouth because lists of local GPs in post offices and citizens' advice bureaux were thought to be sufficient.

On the question of choice of doctor my doctors were marginally in favour of simpler ways for patients to change their GP; most felt that the present system was simple enough although the patients were unaware of it. It was

felt that improvements to existing complaints procedures could undoubtedly be made. Patients, especially those with language difficulties, were often unaware of their rights, which should be widely publicised—for example, in waiting rooms and on medical cards. Complaints should be discussed with a local arbiter as soon as they were received, and a suggested extension of the eight-week limit was not welcomed.

On the Green Paper suggestions for retirement, unlike the BMA, the majority accepted the compulsory retirement of doctors at 70 as well as requiring approval to stay in practice from the age of 65. They were evenly divided as to whether the present 24-hour retirement system, under which doctors can retire and rejoin the NHS at once and draw both pay and pension, should end.

On relations with local hospitals, most of my doctors wanted to be given more information on their referral rates and how these compare with other doctors, but they stressed that such statistics were not particularly relevant and it would be dangerous to draw conclusions or make comparisons.

There was not great support for the Green Paper's proposal to increase the number of GPs involved in the regular checking of children under school age in place of community medical officers. If GPs were to take this on, they should be paid to do so.

Finally, my doctors submitted a large number of suggestions to promote prevention in primary health care. Several were predictable, such as a swingeing tax on cigarettes—advice clearly ignored this year in the Budget in the interests of low inflation—if not banning them altogether with all advertising and sports sponsorship. There was a desire for more funding for the Health Education Authority, more health education in school and a call for every individual to have a health card. Another suggestion was that individuals should be called in for an annual screen health check.

Many of the doctors I questioned simply wanted fewer patients on their lists to enable them to spend more time on appointments and preventive counselling. One practical suggestion was for tertiary health prevention: that is, for GPs to be informed of those patients receiving mobility allowances or invalidity care and attendance allowances. Thus, doctors would be able to take whatever action would be appropriate to prevent the deterioration in health of those already disabled.

The dentists I questioned did not regard access to practices as a problem within my constituency. Preventive care was tending to lead to a shortage of patients and greater competition among dentists. Therefore, any change in contracts to encourage availability of services was regarded as unnecessary. Most of the dentists were against any further relaxation in the restrictions on advertising. They believed that matters had already gone too far and that advertising was not only unethical, but was also ineffective, if not counter-productive. The cost of advertising would have to be passed on to patients and it could lead to a price war, fast dentistry or misleading claims. Reputation and recommendation were generally accepted as the best form of advertising.

The vast majority did not want the law altered to enable unqualified people to run or own dental practices. They could see no benefits to patients from such an alteration and a wide scope for abuse. With regard to prevention I found unanimous support for the right of access for all

[*Mr. David Atkinson*]

children to be treated on a capitation fee basis and broad support for the requirement to give proper advice on maintaining oral health to be fully defined in contracts.

It was felt that the present fee structure based on piece work does not give sufficient encouragement for preventive work and encourages over-prescribing. As with doctors, dentists wanted more time to spend with their patients, especially the young, to explain the need for proper health care. However, the present system of remuneration is regarded as encouraging quantity at the expense of quality, and there was almost universal demand for its reform.

Unlike the doctors, I did not find the same support from the dentists for the Green Paper's proposals for compulsory retirement at 70. They were nearly all opposed to that proposal, believing that it was for patient demand to decide whether dentists should remain professionally active. Dentists are looking for more flexible arrangements from my right hon. Friend regarding retirement.

Finally, on the suggestions to discourage unnecessary treatment, including the recommendations of the committee of inquiry, it was felt that the Green Paper was over-reacting to what was, despite the present system of remuneration, not a widespread problem. It was felt that unnecessary treatment could not otherwise be controlled, except by a stricter monitoring by the dentist reference service and a wider use of officers.

Needless to say, I found wholehearted support for the fluoridation of water supplies. I support that policy and I am aware that my hon. Friend the Minister also shares that support. I should be grateful to learn what progress is being made to implement the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1986 throughout the country. To eliminate dental decay, the loss of teeth, and all the time wasting and costly treatment by the fluoridation of water supplies, without any proven risk, must be sensible.

With regard to the proposals in the Green Paper concerning pharmacists I found broad support for their extended role within the context of the recommendations of the Nuffield Foundation report. It was emphasised that pharmacists were the only health practitioners always available, without appointment, six days a week. On Sundays a pharmacist is available somewhere in the locality. For pharmacists to take on a wider advisory role would be time consuming and it is reasonable to suggest that pharmacists should receive better remuneration. That applies especially to pharmacists who have greater involvement in domiciliary and home delivery services. Such a role is especially important in constituencies such as mine in which there are a large number of rest homes and nursing homes.

Pharmacists should also be actively participating in the education of others involved in community health. The wider use of pharmacies to display health education and health promotion materials was widely accepted. Indeed, such work is already being undertaken with regard to the anti-drug and anti-smoking campaign and advice on family planning. They were not so sure about the practicality of maintaining records of prescriptions issued, which could apply only to regular customers, nor did they regard themselves as the right people to advise GPs on the administration and handling of particularly complex substances, which would certainly require specialist training. They agreed that there did exist further scope for

the relaxation of the restrictions on the sale of medicines, but stressed the need to restrict drugs to their generic names. They welcomed the limited list of drugs, because it reduced the scope for the NHS to be exploited by the drug companies and because too many drugs are produced that are effectively the same, bar the packaging. They could not support non-qualified people doing dispensing without a qualified person being present.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister and her Department will find the results of this consultation in my constituency helpful and not too late to be taken into account in drawing conclusions on the Green Paper consultation. I promised my local practitioners that their views would be drawn to the attention of the Secretary of State. I am grateful to them for meeting me and for this opportunity to report to Parliament.

I conclude by making three important recommendations about the health services generally. First, my experience with this consultation exercise on primary health care together with that as a constituency Member of Parliament who takes a particular interest in mental health—I am the honorary parliamentary consultant to the National Schizophrenia Fellowship—has confirmed that we have a long way to go in providing adequate care in the community. I hope that the current Griffiths review into community care will come to the same conclusion as that of the Audit Commission in that respect.

With regard to schizophrenia sufferers and others who are mentally ill, I am convinced that we are making a grave mistake in closing down our old mental hospitals without adequate accommodation, care and social support being available in the community. Seedy bedsits by night and aimless wandering by day is not a reality that can be tolerated by any civilised society such as ours. I look forward to a further opportunity to enlarge on that to the House in the near future.

Secondly, again my experience concludes that we must now question whether our general practitioners can any longer remain independent of all other NHS services and stay outside the control of agreed targets and costs. Thus, I share the Select Committee's recommendation that the Government should review the likely benefits of the amalgamation between the family practitioner committees and the district health authorities.

Finally, one of the experiences of the recent election campaign was that, despite the Government's magnificent record, compared with that of the previous Labour Government, of making available more resources than ever before for the National Health Service, the public and the patients remain unconvinced. The facts do not match their expectations or experience, and, given even greater demands on our health services, that situation is unlikely to change.

Therefore, to promote a more effective National Health Service and to encourage our people to appreciate better the price that they are paying for it, I hope that the Government will now give the most serious consideration to the establishment of a Department of Health completely separate from that of social security, with the appointment of a Secretary of State for Health, who should have at his disposal all the resources arising from a health tax separately levied from general taxation and shown as such on all pay slips and tax demands. Only in that way do I believe that the public will appreciate that our National Health Service is neither free nor unlimited, and only then will our people be more prepared to accept the personal

responsibility of ensuring the future health needs of themselves and their families in the private sector, which, in my view, is what the Government should ultimately aim for.

10.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on winning his election in Bournemouth, East and, indeed, all my hon. Friends whose faces I see shining so happily on the Back Benches. It is so nice to welcome such a large crowd to our first Adjournment debate in the new Session. I hope that we shall find many of them sitting on those Benches listening to Adjournment debates in the many long months and long hours of the nights to come, as well as you yourself, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to have you chairing our proceedings today.

I am particularly glad that primary care is the subject of the first Adjournment debate of the new Session. I hope that that augurs well for all the work that we want to do on primary care and prevention in the years that face us. There are major changes to come which I believe will be of great benefit in many of the ways that my hon. Friend has described, for our patients and for all those who work in the National Health Service. I think that my hon. Friend's constituents in Bournemouth, East know that they are most fortunate to have him as their Member of Parliament.

My hon. Friend mentioned one important point: many of his constituents are elderly. I understand that more than 40 per cent. of the patients in some of the practices are over 65 years old. Therefore, it is particularly valuable to them to have a young, energetic and caring Member of Parliament who so sensibly takes responsibility for their welfare, and I hope that they recognise the immense effort that he has put into his survey of opinion among his constituents on the primary health care discussion document. I am grateful to him for that.

My hon. Friend may know that we have introduced a new review system for family practitioner committees. The area that he represents is covered by the family practitioner committee for Dorset. I undertook the review of that committee on 19 March 1987. I had the pleasure of meeting the chairman and senior officers of the FPC and I was most impressed by their efforts towards steady improvement of the services—I want to put that on record.

The family practitioner committees are no longer only contractors' committees as they used to be. They are no longer solely responsible for ensuring that doctors, dentists and pharmacists are paid. They are there to promote good health, to identify gaps and to help fill them. For that reason, if for no other, we are not keen to pursue the suggestion that has been made in the Cumberlege report on community nursing, and the social services committee report on primary health care—that the district health authorities and family practitioner committees should be amalgamated. We have already stated that that Cumberlege proposal is not to be pursued.

One of the major reasons for establishing the FPCs as independent authorities in April 1985 was to give a stronger voice to family practitioner services as part of a wider primary health care within the health service as a whole. They must be given time to fit into their new

roles. The evidence that I have seen in Dorset is that they are settling down well. It is too soon to contemplate further major changes, and we have no plans to change that part of the Health Service in the way that has been suggested for the time being.

I turn now to the survey of opinion among his constituents about our discussion document that my hon. Friend conducted and described. We appreciate his enterprise greatly. I hope that he will not mind if I do not comment in detail on all his proposals and suggestions, partly because the consultation period, although over, has not yet resulted in our plans being determined. We shall take his views into account along with all the other comments that we have received and I hope that he will find that acceptable.

The whole idea of the primary care review was to establish and pursue four main objectives. The first was prevention, a subject upon which my hon. Friend touched several times. Secondly, the review was to raise standards of care. Thirdly, it was to make services more responsive to the needs of the public, which he has rightly identified as being a matter of concern to many people. Another well-thumbed document that my hon. Friend has in his own office—the election manifesto—contains that as one of the principles for the Health Service. Fourthly, it was to obtain the best value for money. All the things that we want, and many of those that his constituents would like, do not come free or cheap.

During the consultation period, which was from April to December 1986, 2,500 organisations in England were directly consulted, and we received more than 2,000 comments. My hon. Friend will realise that it takes some time to co-ordinate all that. We have a commitment to respond to the social services committee report on primary health care and we hope to discharge that shortly.

As regards spending on primary health care, the Government have an astonishing record, and I am proud of it. Real spending on family practitioner services between 1978-79 and the year ending in April 1987 increased by 37 per cent. in real terms. That compares with the growth of the other side of the Health Service—the hospital and community health services—of 21 per cent. So, the proportion of total NHS spending that goes on primary care has jumped. Spending on it is now at record levels.

Within the family practitioner services spending on general medical services has gone up by nearly £400 million or 53 per cent. in real terms since we took power. Spending on the general dental services has gone up by nearly £230 million or 42 per cent. in real terms. As a result, since 1979 in England we have 15 per cent. more doctors in the general medical services, 46 per cent. more ancillary staff such as nurses employed by general practitioners, and those numbers are growing very fast. 19 per cent. more nursing and midwifery staff working in primary care, 20 per cent. more dentists in the general dental services and 11 per cent. more retail pharmacies in England and Wales. That was in a period during which we were all worried that the number of retail pharmacies was falling. Finally, there are 38 per cent. more ophthalmic opticians in England and Wales. If I might just pick up obliquely my hon. Friend's last remarks, the growth in the number of ophthalmic

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

opticians shows that when one changes something, one often improves it. This change has resulted in a great improvement in services to the public.

My hon. Friend asked about fluoridation. He was a supporter with me when we passed the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985. Very good progress has been made since then. In the areas of the country that have the worst dental decay, which I think he and I would agree are the areas where we would like to see improvements in fluoridation — north-western, Yorkshire and Oxford health regions — fluoridation groups have now been formed and are actively engaged in planning the introduction of fluoridation. From early next year, in the west midlands region about 1 million people will benefit from fluoridation. In Trent, which is the region covering my own constituency, fluoridation is now built into the region's strategy and the water in my own village is now fluoridated. Many parts of Trent have natural fluoride in the water which gives some protection. In the Wessex region, which covers my hon. Friend's constituency, the water systems are surprisingly complex and we would like to see progress with fluoridation move a little faster than it is. On the other hand, for a variety of reasons it is not one of the regions with the highest levels of dental decay. However, we would like to see some progress in those neighbourhoods.

My hon. Friend raised the question of alternative medicine. He probably knows at least some of the answer. Medical treatment under the Health Service must be given or prescribed by a practitioner registered with the General Medical Council. Such practitioners can offer any form of therapy. We are very interested in the current debate on alternative medicine. I noted his reference to the British Medical Association report. As he rightly said, some of it was favourable and some of it was rather critical. We have not yet formed any plans to restrict or enhance the role of alternative therapists but we shall be considering an application from the

Research Council for Complementary Medicine for grant aid under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 to support work and to identify in scientific terms the benefits of alternative therapists. The Medical Research Council is already supporting a comparative trial of chiropractic and conventional care for back pain. The results of both these trials may well be of the greatest interest.

I note my hon. Friend's comments on mental health.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry, I cannot, as I have to finish at 10.30. I note my hon. Friend's comments on mental health and I would like to put on record our appreciation of the representations he has made with such distinction in this important and often ignored area. I hope he will accept that I have noted what he has said and that it will be taken into account. He also suggested a separate department of health and the way in which that department might be funded. These are matters for the Prime Minister and for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as indeed are his remarks about cigarettes and one or two other matters in which we share an interest. It is most important that these interests get put on record and that views are taken. As far as I know, there are no immediate plans to make changes in the ways he suggested.

I thank my hon. Friend warmly for raising these issues. He has provided us in detail with all the information that he gathered from his constituents and I assure him that it is very much taken into account. His constituents are fortunate to have him and I am fortunate to have been able to respond to the first debate this session on primary care, which is a most important subject to us all.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 26 June 1987.

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

Member Sworn

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath:

Toby Francis Henry Jessel, esquire, Twickenham.

BILLS PRESENTED

ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT (PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES)

Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe, supported by Mr. Ian Stewart, Mr. David Mellor and Mr. Tim Eggar, presented a Bill to provide for conferring privileges and immunities on observers, inspectors and auxiliary personnel exercising functions under international agreements or arrangements for furthering arms control or disarmament: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Monday 29 June and to be printed. [Bill 1.]

BRITISH SHIPBUILDERS (BORROWING POWERS)

Mr. Kenneth Clarke, supported by Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Channon, Mr. John Major and Mr. Robert Atkins, presented (under Standing Order No. 48 (procedure upon Bills whose main object is to create a change upon the public revenue)) a Bill to raise the limits imposed by section 11(7) of the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act 1977 in relation to the finances of British Shipbuilders and its wholly-owned subsidiaries: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Monday 29 June and to be printed. [Bill 4.]

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Mr. Kenneth Clarke, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Ridley and Mr. John Wakeham, presented a Bill to extend the leasing powers of the Chancellor and Council of the Duchy of Lancaster: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Monday 29 June and to be printed. [Bill 5.]

CHANNEL TUNNEL

Mr. Secretary Channon, supported by the Prime Minister, Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. Norman Lamont and Mr. David Mitchell, presented a Bill to provide for the construction and operation of a railway tunnel system under the English Channel, together with associated works; to provide for connected improvements in the road network near Ashford, in Kent, and in the rail network in South Eastern England; to incorporate part of the railway tunnel system into the United Kingdom and to provide for the application and enforcement of law in relation to, and otherwise for the regulation of, that system and matters connected with it; to provide for the construction of certain highways and associated works in the vicinity of Folkestone; and for connected purposes: And the same was passed, pursuant to the Standing Order of 13 May in the last Session of Parliament.

DARTFORD-THURROCK CROSSING

Mr. Secretary Channon, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. John Major and Mr. Peter Bottomley, presented a Bill to provide for the construction of a bridge over the river Thames between Dartford in Kent and Thurrock in Essex and of associated works; to provide for the Secretary of State to be the highway authority for the highways passing through the tunnels under that river between Dartford and Thurrock and their approaches, instead of Kent and Essex County Councils; to provide for the levying of tolls, by a person appointed by the Secretary of State, or by the Secretary of State in respect of traffic using the crossing; to provide for transfers of property and liabilities of those Councils to the person appointed and the Secretary of State and for the transfer to the Secretary of State of property and liabilities of the person appointed on termination of his appointment; to provide for the management of the crossing, including the imposition of prohibitions, restrictions and requirements in relation to traffic, and otherwise in relation to the crossing; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time, pursuant to the Standing Order of 13 May in the last Session of Parliament; and ordered to be read a Second time on Monday 29 June and to be printed. [Bill 3.]

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Secretary Ridley, supported by Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Fowler, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. John Major and Mr. Michael Howard, presented a Bill to secure that local and other public authorities undertake certain activities only if they can do so competitively; to regulate certain functions of local and other public authorities in connection with public supply or works contracts; to authorise and regulate the provision of financial assistance by local authorities for certain housing purposes; to make provision about local authorities' publicity, local government administration, land held by public bodies, direct labour organisations, arrangements under the Employment and Training Act 1973, the Commission for Local Authority Accounts in Scotland, the auditing of accounts of local authorities in Scotland, and dog licences; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Monday 29 June and to be printed. [Bill 2.]

NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK BROADS

Mr. Secretary Ridley, supported by Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Fowler, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. John MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Channon, Mr. John Major and Mr. Colin Moynihan, presented a Bill to establish an authority to be known as the Broads Authority; to make provision with respect to its powers; to make provision with respect to the area commonly known as the Broads and with respect to the Great Yarmouth Port and Haven and its Commissioners; to provide for the making of grants to the Authority by the Secretary of State; and for connected purposes: And the same was recommended to a Standing Committee pursuant to the Standing Order of 13 May in the last Session of Parliament; and ordered to be printed. [Bill 6.]

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [25 June]

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—[Mr. Churchill.]

Question again proposed.

Foreign Affairs

9.37 am

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): This is the first foreign affairs debate of the new Parliament, an important occasion notable for several different features—first, from my own point of view. Rather unusually, I spent almost the whole of the last week of the election campaign in Venice, and the whole of polling day in Iceland. I was rewarded with a flattering increase in my majority. I am not sure what that proves.

The second feature is that, as far as we can judge, this is the last debate of its kind—or, indeed, of any kind—in which I shall share a Front-Bench role with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), and the last time that the House will hear the right hon. Gentleman speak in that capacity. He will not mind if I say that he is a substantial enough figure to write his own political obituary. Indeed, he would probably not allow anyone else to have a shot at it. He will also allow me to say that his departure from the Opposition Front Bench is a matter of regret in both personal and House of Commons terms.

If the records are correct, the right hon. Gentleman has spent 28 years on the Front Bench. It is 23 years since he first took Government office in 1964, and it is an astonishing reflection that for just over half that time he and I have been shadowing or dogging one another in one capacity or another. I hope that he will regard it as something of a tribute if I describe him as a political acrobat who has performed more somersaults than most constitutions can stand. The right hon. Gentleman has featured in each election campaign by at least once testing his own luck and the patience of his colleagues almost to destruction. On this occasion I hope that he will honour the House by offering us some mature reflections on the faltering power of prayer within the Kremlin.

We wish the right hon. Gentleman a happy retirement, although it is only a provisional retirement, to the Back Benches and we offer this advice to him. If he is intent on producing any memoirs of his long time in office, it would probably be most prudent if he confined himself to the photographs and left his charming wife, to whom we all send our good wishes, to write the text, of which she has tremendous experience.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): I cannot say the same for the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On that happy, conjugal note, I turn to the subject of the debate.

It must be said that the election was hardly dominated by foreign policy questions; but most of us would agree that one important foreign policy issue was only just below the surface throughout the campaign—that of East-West relations and arms control. So it was, in a way, quite fitting that the conclusions reached at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council that opened in Reykjavik on polling day were indeed a notable fulfilment of this Government's tenacious efforts over a number of years to promote a real improvement in East-West relations. We intend to keep up that momentum. The Czech Foreign Minister was a welcome visitor to Britain last week, and we look forward to seeing his Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian colleagues in London in the autumn. I hope to visit the Soviet Union again later this year, and in due course we should certainly welcome a further visit to Britain by Mr. Gorbachev.

It is indeed the impact of Mr. Gorbachev on Soviet policy which enhances the prospect of change in the previously frozen immobility of East-West relations. I have no doubt that Mr. Gorbachev realises that he needs a stable international environment that will allow him to concentrate on his monumental task of domestic reform. There is some evidence that this realisation may be having some impact on his foreign policy decisions, but it remains far from clear that the full implications of this have been grasped by the Soviet leadership—far from clear that the destabilising ambitions and dogmas of past years have been abandoned. So, while we welcome the signs of change in Mr. Gorbachev's Soviet Union that are clearly positive, we remain vigilant for our own security. We are determined not to mistake a mirage for reality. Even so, there is one vision that may well become reality this year—the conclusion of an INF agreement. The Reykjavik meeting was crucial in shaping the Western approach to that.

The Government have been one of the main architects of the agreement reached at Reykjavik on the double zero option. The communiqué restated NATO's wish to see the global elimination of long range intermediate nuclear missiles. It also endorsed the objective of the reduction to zero on both sides, again on a global basis, of missiles with ranges down to 500 km. These decisions were not easy for all members of the NATO Alliance; they are a tribute to the unity of purpose of the Alliance.

The progress that has been made towards an INF agreement is a clear vindication of the policy of negotiation from strength—above all, of the twin track decision that NATO has pursued for many years. I can readily understand that Opposition Members may have mixed feelings about that, because they opposed the decision to introduce Pershing 2 and cruise missiles to European territory in response to the Soviet deployment of SS20 missiles. Experience underlines the fact that this was a grave misjudgment on their part. I believe that it was an important reason why the electorate rejected so decisively the outdated and discredited unilateralist policies of the Opposition.

At Reykjavik, the NATO Council also looked at the arms control agenda on a wider basis, because it would be wrong to allow the Soviet Union to confine the debate on

arms control to nuclear weapons. The more we make progress in reducing nuclear armories, the more vital it becomes to tackle the Warsaw pact's overwhelming preponderance in chemical and conventional weapons. Our purpose is to prevent all war, not just nuclear war. The whole House will therefore welcome the confirmation again in the Reykjavik communiqué of the Alliance's priorities that were set out last December. They are the same priorities as are spelled out in the Gracious Speech from the Throne—50 per cent. cuts in strategic offensive weapons, the global elimination of chemical weapons and agreement to redress imbalances in conventional weapons.

Even those measures cannot be considered in isolation. It was for that reason that the Reykjavik meeting agreed to take further our work on a comprehensive concept of arms control and disarmament. Our aim is to ensure that progress in these and other potential areas, including shorter range missiles, continues to enhance, not to undermine, the prospects of peace in Europe.

The Reykjavik meeting also made important progress in preparing within the Alliance for negotiations on achieving a better conventional balance. The House will recall that since agreement at Halifax on the principle of such negotiations just a year ago, there have been difficulties in agreeing within the Alliance on the framework in which they should be pursued, so the House will, I hope, welcome the resolution of those difficulties at Reykjavik and again acknowledge the central role played by Her Majesty's Government in helping to bring that about.

Of course, security involves much more than just military balances. It is also about human issues—above all, about human rights.

Mr. Ian Delyell (Linlithgow): Was it with the Foreign Secretary's authority or with the authority of some other Minister that the intelligence services arranged for the export of the Short Blowpipe missiles to Afghanistan?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman will recall that the practice of successive Administrations has been to refrain from commenting on questions of that kind. However, I must add that it is astonishing that anybody should be alarmed or dismayed by the efforts of the Afghan people to defend themselves against the Soviet onslaught. They face the might of a vast, modern army, and most hon. Members will thank goodness that modern weapons are getting through to help them.

Mr. Delyell rose—

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has had his bite of that cherry. He will make his speech later.

On the subject of human rights, it is relevant to reflect on the impact on human rights of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. It is an insight into the attitude of the Soviet Union to these questions. In Europe, we have a unique framework for pursuing these questions—namely, the Helsinki commitments and the CSCE process. Those commitments were freely entered into by the Soviet Union and her allies. The Russian performance in living up to the Helsinki commitments will inevitably, and quite rightly, be seen as a touchstone of its good faith in other respects.

During the election campaign I was struck, as perhaps were other hon. Members, by the number of people who raised with me the question of human rights. I was struck

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also by the strength of feeling with which they did so. I think that the whole House will join me in stressing the importance of improving Soviet performance on human rights. In the last few months there has been some increase in the rate of Jewish emigration that it allows. Again I hope that the whole House will agree with me when I say that we look for further substantial improvements in that respect.

A better climate of East-West relations would also make a number of regional issues easier to deal with, although by itself it will not solve them. This is one of the challenges to which the Government will respond in the years ahead—the promotion of peaceful settlements to some of the endemic disputes in the middle east, southern Africa and more widely. That task is made much harder by the fact that so often the nations and cultures that are involved in these disputes are themselves disintegrating or are internally fragmented.

One vivid example of that sad disintegration is the Lebanon. When President Gemayel was here recently, we made clear to him our continuing support for Lebanon's territorial unity and integrity. However, we cannot close our eyes to the tragic divisions in Lebanese society—the bitter fighting and the continuing presence of foreign troops. I am sure that the House will join me in paying tribute to the dedication of our Beirut embassy, which is continuing to work in very difficult and dangerous circumstances. Like all of us, it is watching for any encouraging signs about our hostages. The lack of firm news is agonising for the families, who have our deepest sympathy. The continuing detention of innocent people is a constant reminder of the suffering that terrorism inflicts.

Such outrages do not benefit the terrorists' cause. Quite the reverse; they stiffen our resolve to stand firm. That policy is widely respected around the world. We remain in the forefront of concerted international efforts to prevent terrorist outrages and to reduce the room for manoeuvre for those who perpetrate them.

We need to take account of the root causes of terrorism; not to excuse them, but to understand them. That is part of the importance of the central Arab-Israel issue. We discussed that again this week with Foreign Minister Peres. It is no platitude to say that the Government remain deeply concerned about the lack of progress towards a negotiated settlement.

We and our European partners firmly support the principle of an international conference. It remains the most practical way forward to negotiations between the parties that are directly concerned. It would help to enhance Israel's security and lead to justice for the Palestinian people. In our view, the conference should act as a framework within which direct negotiations between the parties can take place. It should not have the right to impose solutions, nor to veto agreements that are reached between the parties. Britain is, as ever, ready to play her full part. Indeed, our history and responsibilities in the Security Council as a permanent member make it our duty to do so.

Much preparation will be needed before any conference can succeed. We welcome the efforts that have already been made, notably by Mr. Peres and His Majesty King Hussein, to reach agreement on arrangements for a conference, and those efforts should be energetically pursued.

No opportunity must be missed to take a major step forward in the process. All the permanent members of the Security Council and other parties should be involved. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is looking forward to discussing this further next month when she sees King Hussein in London and President Reagan in Washington.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Will my right hon. and learned Friend spell out the Government's position with regard to the Palestine Liberation Organisation being invited to take part in such a conference, bearing in mind, whether we like it or not, that it represents the views of the Palestinian people?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand my hon. Friend's interest in that important question, but I shall not try to spell out the precise form of representation at the conference because, as he will recognise, it is one of the most important questions. Plainly—and I think that there is a consensus on this—Israel, her neighbours and the permanent members should be represented at the conference, but it is equally clear that proper Palestinian representation must be assured as well. I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not go further now, but we are treading in a sector which is of importance to all those who potentially wish to take part in this conference.

I turn now to the other main middle eastern question—the Iran-Iraq conflict, about which we are deeply disturbed. It is a shocking fact that hundreds of thousands of young lives have been lost in this senseless fight. The number of deaths is now about the same as Britain's losses in the trench warfare of the first world war. Iran and Iraq should realise the damage that the fighting does to the stability of the region. They must start looking realistically for a peaceful settlement.

The role of the United Nations' Secretary General is critical in that, and that is why we and the other four permanent members have been discussing how to stimulate progress. The Security Council met in informal session earlier this week. We want to mobilise the full authority of the United Nations to bring home to both belligerents the need to stop fighting and start talking. Our hope is that before long a resolution can be put forward which will command the necessary degree of support. Such progress will reduce the threat to freedom of navigation in the Gulf, which has increased in recent months. The attack on the USS Stark showed the high risk of miscalculation of confrontation. Royal Navy ships in the region are protecting our right to free navigation. Already this year they have successfully accompanied 119 merchant ships. They are not there to seek confrontation. Their presence is designed to protect genuine British interests, and we oppose any action which would increase tension in this important international waterway.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Has the Foreign Secretary noticed the speculation in Washington on this topic using the words, "A surgical operation" and comparing it to potential fruits claimed from the Falklands and Grenada? Does he agree that there is always a risk in any surgical operation, including that of gangrene?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure that I follow the point that the hon. Gentleman has made in his analogy, but he is right to draw attention to the need to avoid any action that increases tension in the area. The situation is tense.

and no one wants to make matters worse in any sense. It is a topic that I look forward to discussing later today, along with other regional issues, with my colleague from Oman, Mr. Yusuf Alawi.

That brings me to the question of our relations with Iran. The level of our relations has been sharply reduced in recent weeks. I want to emphasise quite clearly that that has been their choice, not ours. The House will not need to be reminded of the Iranians' violent abduction of Mr. Edward Chaplin, who was our No. 2 in Iran. Such behaviour undermines the basis on which Governments deal with each other. We were right to react strongly to such an incident and our partners and allies understand why we did so. Nevertheless, we remain ready to build a constructive long-term relationship with Iran. But that can only happen on the basis of strict reciprocity of representation. We are interested in the substance of relations between states, not in the preservation of an empty shell. On that basis we ask that others respect, as we do, the civilised code of diplomatic behaviour. Our consistent approach to matters of that kind has set a standard which is widely respected.

I said earlier that we live in a world where, sadly, many fundamental rules of international conduct are widely disregarded. That is all the more reason for the United Kingdom to act as a beacon of common sense and stability. That practical approach to problems is the one that we seek to commend in each of the international groupings to which we belong. The Commonwealth is one such important grouping. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I look forward to the Vancouver meeting in October. The European Community is also important in this context, and I shall return to that in a moment.

A good example of the international community making its collective voice heard against oppression is Afghanistan. For seven years the Soviet occupation has regularly been denounced by the United Nations and by a huge majority that has few parallels. In the same spirit the House will wish to praise the Afghan resistance for its heroism and to express support for Pakistan's courage in shouldering the enormous refugee burden. We and the world want an early, complete withdrawal of Soviet forces, leading to a neutral, non-aligned Afghanistan.

Mr. Gorbachev has said that he shares that objective. That may well be so. But, as I said during my visit to the Khyber Pass 15 months ago, "The time has come for action, not words." It is action by the Soviet Union that I meant. Will Mr. Gorbachev now make possible a breakthrough in negotiations? The acid test of success will be whether it is acceptable to the Afghan people. The world will wait to see how many of the 5 million Afghan refugees choose to return to their homeland.

Mr. Dalyell: What is the Government's policy on the sending of arms, such as Blowpipe missiles, to Afghanistan?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already answered that question. It is astonishing that anyone should be alarmed or dismayed at the efforts of the people of Afghanistan, who are facing an army of more than 100,000 Soviet troops, to defend themselves against the Soviet onslaught. Most people would say that we should give thanks that weapons are getting through to them.

I come to a different regional problem—the tragic problem of South Africa. It may seem less newsworthy

today than recently, but it has not gone away. The morally abhorrent structure of apartheid remains in place, and fundamental changes are needed to displace it. Sadly, but it must be faced, there is no dramatic action that can make that happen quickly. There is, however, a growing realisation of the complexity of the problem. The difficulties of the region, both in South Africa and in neighbouring states, are bad enough; mandatory sanctions would only make matters worse. Practical measures, not empty gestures, are needed. We shall go on pressing the case against violence, and for dialogue, for fundamental change and for an end to apartheid.

We shall sustain our programme of help to South Africa's neighbours. We have given them more than \$1 billion worth of aid during the past five years. In Mozambique in particular economic difficulties have been compounded by famine and conflict. Heart-rending television reports have vividly portrayed the human suffering. Britain has led the way in the international response. We were delighted to welcome President Chissano to London a few weeks ago. We have recently doubled the scale of training which we are providing, with the help of our friends in Zimbabwe, for the Mozambican army. In food and other aid, this year alone we have already committed £34 million to help Mozambique. The whole House will want to pay tribute also to the notable part being played, as so often before, by British non-governmental organisations and charities. My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development stands ready to consider further action. The food shortages in some developing countries contrast with surpluses in most of the rest of the world, not only in Europe.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Noticeable in the Queen's Speech was a general reference to working along the lines that my right hon. and learned Friend has just described, but there was not this year—although my right hon. and learned Friend has used the words in his speech—a reference to working for peaceful and fundamental change in South Africa, and specifically the early independence of Namibia. Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that those are the Government's major thrusts in that area?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend need feel no anxiety on that score. The policy and position remain unchanged. The preparation of the Queen's Speech cannot be confined by the obligation to repeat policy in carbon-copy terms from one year to the next. It was because of that type of anxiety that I took the opportunity in my speech of spelling out the need for fundamental change in South Africa.

Next week, European Heads of Government will meet in Brussels for the European Council. On the following day, the Single European Act, which the House debated at some length last year, will enter into force. Obviously, financing will be high on the Brussels agenda. This year's budget is the most immediate problem. The Heads of Government will not, of course, be drawn deeply into its detail, but they should insist on the need for an early agreement in the Budget Council. In our view, the short-term problems are far from insuperable. The key should be to make full use of the Commission's proposal to switch payments for agricultural support from advances to reimbursements. That will not only save money this year, but improve long-term financial control. It is our view that

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the European Council should agree also on the need for an early decision on this year's agricultural price fixing. Beyond that lies the more fundamental question of the Community's long-term financing.

It is gradually becoming more widely understood that farm surpluses are not just a European problem; they are a worldwide consequence of explosive scientific success in boosting agricultural yields. Venice, like previous economic summits, urged Japan, the United States and others to root out agricultural protectionism. That does not relieve Europe of the need to do exactly the same. We have to find new ways of sustaining the vitality and prosperity of our rural communities which do not involve the production of wasteful food surpluses. So CAP reform is fundamental to the Community's longer-term finances. It must be made plain that we have made a start. This is the fifth year of successive price cuts. We have in place measures to curb over-production of milk and beef. This year's price package includes tough measures—action, for example, on cereals equivalent to a price cut of 11 per cent.

But the Community needs to step up the pace of change. It needs to be ready to take even more radical decisions. They will not be easy. We must set up stabilising mechanisms to prevent surplus production of individual commodities. We must reject non-solutions, such as the proposed oils and fats tax. We must dismantle the system of monetary compensatory amounts. We must develop fresh and imaginative ways of helping rural communities within the framework of common policies. All those changes have to be achieved within a firmer framework of budgetary discipline. Only when such advances have been set in hand would it make sense to consider the Community's overall revenue needs on the basis foreshadowed in the Fontainebleau agreement.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): While on this important subject, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman say something about the United Kingdom's short-sighted and obstructionist view on the European framework research programme, which will lead directly to the loss of British jobs unless the British Government remove their veto within the next few days? What will happen?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman must understand the importance of reaching conclusions that take account of the overall availability and non-availability of resources. One must take great care about agreeing on any programme without asking oneself, and getting an answer, whether resources will be available to meet the programme foreshadowed within that framework. [Interruption.] Even in respect of the whole Community, the question of the availability of resources arises. That is how one must look at it. In any event, the hon. Gentleman may have an opportunity to develop his case later in the debate.

Mr. George Robertson indicated dissent.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Perhaps one day he will.

Our aim is to build a secure long-term financial future for the Community as a whole—not just for agriculture but for the wider structural policies, including the one to which the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson)

referred. Honest money is the foundation for Britain's industrial and commercial prosperity. It is no less essential for the Community.

In contrast to the dark days of the late 1970s—when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East was last in office—when Britain's economic and political performance was an object of international burlesque, this country is seen in a new light today. I dare say that the Opposition have been gratified in recent weeks to read some of the French newspapers. I hope that they have been able to observe some of the opinions recorded in the overseas press. For example, *L'Express* said:

"Britain has a foreign policy which has made the British proud of themselves again".

Le Nouvel Economiste described Britain under a Conservative Government as

"the defender of European independence".

I could go on—[Interruption.]—but I see that I am provoking dismay among the Opposition because they well know that their proposals for Britain's defence would have endangered peace and freedom.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Not now, I am afraid.

The simple fact is that today all countries of good will, and many that lack it, are thankful to deal with a British Government whose purpose and determination are unswerving, whose policies are consistent and whose talking is straight. It is supremely in Britain's interest that they should see us in that way and that we should continue to deserve that trust. Under this Conservative Government, we shall continue to do so.

10.10 am

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): I think that we all enjoyed another lugubrious concatenation of meaningless clichés from the Foreign Secretary, but I was deeply touched by his opening words of personal tribute. I was not quite sure whether they were intended as a garland or a wreath, but there were enough thorns concealed among the flowers to make me realise that, whatever else it was composed of, it was not a "helianthus".

Some commentators have described the speech on which I now embark as a swan-song. Politically, I have never seen myself as an elegant and decorative object of unsullied whiteness—and nor, I suspect, has the Conservative Front Bench. I suppose that politically I am a bird of prey, but in any case I can assure those who view this speech as a swan-song that I do not propose to die when I sit down in half an hour's time. Not being a swan but rather a bird of prey, I shall move to a somewhat higher perch, from which I shall be able to select my quarry from a wider range of animals, although I assure the Foreign Secretary that I shall not ignore the familiar fleece of friends from the Foreign Office flock.

As the Foreign Secretary suggested, before my elevation, I should like to reflect a little on my experiences over the last 33 years since I first spoke on foreign affairs from the Front Bench. Incidentally, I assure my hon. Friends that I intend to be elevated only four Benches up below the Gangway and not to another place.

I shall concentrate on the issues which first brought me into politics as a young man before the war, and which have occupied most of my active political life since I left the Army in 1945. The problem that concerns all of us

most of all is how to prevent a third world war, because we know that if a third world war ever takes place there will be no one left behind to reflect upon its lessons. In particular, I shall examine the problem presented to mankind by the nuclear arms race, which has led to the accumulation of some 50,000 nuclear warheads at unimaginable expense with a destructive power of a million Hiroshima bombs. That accumulation and expenditure have not added one jot to the security of any of the countries that have engaged in the race. That accumulation of weapons would mean suicide for a country that initiated their use and could mean the end of the human race north of the equator.

The Foreign Secretary had his customary bit of fun with the many changes of position made by myself and others in considering this problem. But any rational man who has lived through the past 40 years and reflected on the way in which the world has changed as a result of the invention of nuclear weapons will surely have changed his views. I well remember when, as a young officer in Italy, I heard the news of the explosions of nuclear weapons over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Like all my comrades, I simply felt an immense sense of relief that the prospect of five years of fighting Japan in Asia after five years of fighting Germany in Europe was finally lifted from me.

The conclusions that I have reached 40 years later have been reached independently by a growing number of military experts, including my main military advisers when I was Defence Secretary 20 years ago — Lord Mountbatten and Field Marshal Lord Carver. They have been reached, too, by two of the most outstanding international statesmen — with whom I have worked — Bob McNamara in America and Helmut Schmidt in Germany. The lessons are twofold. The first is that nuclear weapons are not a deterrent against conventional attack. The best proof of that is that during the Vietnam war the United States allowed itself to suffer more military casualties than it now has troops in Europe but never once so much as threatened to use nuclear weapons to bring that war to an end. Another example, which is perhaps a little nearer home, is the fact that Britain's nuclear weapons did not deter General Galtieri from invading the Falklands, nor did they play any role in getting him out after the invasion.

The second lesson that needs to be reflected on is that nuclear war is not a possible instrument of policy or a source of political influence in the modern world. Chernobyl reminded us all, I hope, that to use nuclear weapons against Western Europe — whoever used them — or in Western Europe would create a radioactive desert of no conceivable value to the aggressor. On the contrary, the fallout from the explosion of those nuclear weapons would pose major risks to the survival of any society within 1,000 miles of the explosions. Indeed, the growing number of civilian nuclear reactors in Western Europe poses similar risks — even from a large scale conventional war in Europe. The Royal Commission on the environment reported to the present Government in 1983 that, had there been as many nuclear civilian reactors during the last world war as there are today, large parts of the continent would still be uninhabitable.

I hope that the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues have reflected on these facts — because they are, indeed, facts — which have helped to produce the biggest change in Russia's approach to the world since 1917. The Foreign Secretary was far too ungenerous in his assessment of

Soviet intentions and, indeed, far too conservative. I recommend him to read an article by one of his officials — a Mr. Lyne — in the current issue of *International Affairs*. In that article Mr. Lyne expresses only his own view, but I understand that he has long experience of dealing with the Soviet Union in the diplomatic service.

The Russians — and I think the Americans, too — have accepted that peace can be secured today not by continuing the nuclear arms race but only by co-operating with one's political opponents in reducing and controlling armaments, both nuclear and conventional. President Reagan reached that conclusion five or six years ago, although the methods that he has chosen to deal with the problem are not approved by most of us in this House — certainly not by the Foreign Secretary, who made a courageous speech criticising the star wars programme, for which the Prime Minister later apologised to President Reagan.

What President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev set out to do at their meeting in Reykjavik only a few months ago is seen by them as the only way forward, and they have now almost agreed on the first major step in the removal of nuclear weapons from the world as a whole by agreeing to move two whole classes of nuclear missiles from Europe. I hope that that will lead to their removal from the rest of the world and I shall come to that point in a moment.

It became very evident during the election campaign that the military leaders of NATO strongly disapprove of the double zero proposals that their political leaders have now accepted. General Rogers has said that the proposals give him "gas pains" and I have no doubt that he will repeat his criticisms in the television interview to be shown on "Newsnight" tonight. The military bases its objections to the proposals on the perfectly accurate assessment that the removal of the missiles from the European theatre would make the strategy of flexible response impossible. General Rogers has repeatedly said that recently. I have no doubt that the Government have been given similar advice by some of their own military experts. General Rogers went on to state that such a strategy would be impossible unless such missiles are replaced by other weapons with a similar role and capability, in which case, of course, there would be little point in removing existing missiles.

It appalled me during the election campaign to hear that the Defence Secretary had agreed with his colleagues at Stavanger to consider basing cruise missiles on submarines in Holy Loch and to put more American nuclear bombers — perhaps B52s — on airfields all over Britain, just as the cruise missiles, the ground-launched missiles, were being trundled out of Greenham common and Molesworth. It seems to me, and, I hope, to the Foreign Secretary, to be insane to think in such terms. We were told a lot by the Foreign Secretary, and, indeed, the Prime Minister, about the importance of not allowing any country to circumvent an agreement to remove intermediate nuclear forces from Europe, but that would be circumvention on an absolutely colossal scale.

I congratulate the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office on becoming the Foreign Secretary's deputy. We always enjoy her speeches and the courage that she shows in making them. I hope that she will be able to tell us that the Government absolutely rule out any such ideas. They are calculated to destroy any

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possibility of an agreement on the double zero option, an agreement to which the Government committed themselves in the Gracious Speech yesterday.

Chancellor Kohl, the leader of West Germany, moved in exactly the opposite direction when he finally decided to support the double zero option. He is not in the least reassured by the fact that, after the removal of longer-range missiles, there will remain 4,000 nuclear weapons in Western Europe, nearly all of them being of too short a range to be used anywhere except on German soil. He wants the triple zero option. He wants to remove battlefield nuclear weapons from Europe as well. He is quite right, but, of course, it would remove the last shred of credibility in NATO's current strategy of flexible response as it was first laid down over 20 years ago in a different situation. More interesting, Chancellor Kohl has proved the sincerity of his attachment to the triple zero option by warning the French Government that he could not allow them to use their tactical weapons such as Hades and Pluton because they could be used only against targets on German soil. He is asking for an assurance that they will not be used without the permission of the German Government.

I have no doubt that the German Government will, reasonably, now begin to insist to NATO that the control of NATO's nuclear weapons or their use should not lie just with the host country and with the possessor of weapons but with the country on whose soil they are likely to be used. To sweeten the pill, in return, Chancellor Kohl has offered to start building an integrated Franco-German army. The Foreign Secretary reminded us that he is to meet his French and German colleagues in Brussels in a couple of days. I hope that it concerns him that, at present, there is no place for Britain in movements by the French and German Governments to build a new type of army in Europe. It concerns me because there are many reasons for supporting the case for a European pillar inside NATO, but none for supporting a pillar that excludes Britain and the United States. I hope that the Minister, in replying to the debate, will make some comment on that issue. It is acquiring greater importance with every day that passes.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that an instrument that could more effectively be used to enhance the European identity within the Western Alliance in the security policy field would be genuinely to revive the Western European Union, not just to make speeches about it, but actually to do something practical to make at least the seven-nation collaboration really work?

Mr. Healey: I strongly agree with the need for European members of the Alliance, as loyal members of NATO, to try to develop more coherence in their policies and in the organisation of their military forces within NATO. Whether that is best done through the somewhat moribund organisation of WEU is quite another matter. If I may, without offence, refer to my own experience 20 years ago as Defence Secretary, I found it to be the case that, if the British Government presented a practical and coherent proposal to their European allies, they would accept it, as they did when we set up the Eurogroup and the nuclear planning group. The Americans, whatever

misgivings they may have, will accept it, too. Hon. Members will find some misgivings expressed in Dr. Kissinger's book.

There is one member of the Government who cannot complain about what is happening, and that is the Prime Minister. In an appalling speech on Television Moscow, she rejected the very concept of alliance between a nuclear power and a non-nuclear power. I shall quote from the Government's monitoring report. She said:

"Nuclear weapons are the only means allowing a small country to stand up to a big one."

That statement appalled her listeners. I hope that it appals the Foreign Secretary, too. It would imply that Nicaragua should acquire nuclear weapons to stand up to the United States and that Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola should acquire nuclear weapons to stand up to South Africa. That idea rejects the very principle of collective security—the very principle of security through alliance—and it is a recipe for a universal nuclear arms race that could end only in the destruction of mankind.

Let me express a characteristically timid hope now that the election is over. Can we hope, now that she has left the hustings—although one would not have thought so while listening to her speech yesterday—that the Prime Minister will be a little more careful about the implications of her rhetoric? Her attempt to justify the Trident programme by attempting to revive the psychosis of the cold war is profoundly dangerous to peace. It is also dangerous to the unity of the Alliance. If she will not accept that stricture from me, I hope that she will accept it from Professor Sir Michael Howard, whom I know she respects, as I do, who wrote an article in *The Times* during the election. He stated:

"Mrs. Thatcher finds it necessary to try to foment another Red Scare, stirring up atavistic emotions on a scale she may one day regret. 'Of course there is a Soviet threat,' she dogmatically asserts, professing herself 'astonished' that anybody can believe otherwise."

Professor Sir Michael Howard went on to state:

"if she means that the Soviet Union has a settled intention to attack Western Europe and subjugate it by armed force the moment we allow our guard to slip, then she had better get used to being astonished."

If she will not take the advice of Professor Sir Michael Howard, I hope that she will re-read the writings of a great, robust Englishman who, after winning the election, she preferred to quote rather than St. Francis of Assisi. I refer, of course, to Rudyard Kipling. I hope that she will re-read the chapter in "Traffic and Discoveries" in which Kipling described a Conservative politician who talked at a public school as "A Jelly-bellied Flag flapper." I strongly support Rudyard Kipling's view of that type of behaviour and I hope that we shall have no more of it from the Prime Minister. I hope that there is a chance that she will think again about the kind of bellicose claptrap that she used during the election campaign because it is incompatible with the course of action that is recommended to the House through the Gracious Speech. There is no chance of the double zero option being agreed if the Prime Minister really believes what she previously said and acts on that belief. She has committed herself to support the double zero option now, even though *The Times* may be right in suggesting that she did so purely for electoral reasons.

I hope that the Minister will clear up another element of confusion in Government policy. During the election campaign, the Defence Secretary agreed with his colleagues in Brussels to increase British defence spending

by 3 per cent. per year in real terms or to go on improving our conventional forces. The Foreign Secretary will recall, however, that the Government told us in their last two White Papers that, on the contrary, they had decided to cut defence spending by 8 per cent. in the five years to 1990 and that the demands of the Trident programme meant cutting new equipment for our conventional forces by 30 per cent. in the next few years. The Foreign Secretary's colleagues will have told him that at present the Rhine Army's ammunition is sufficient for only two days' fighting rather than the nine or 10 days laid down by NATO as a requirement.

We should like the Minister to answer the following question: Was the Defence Secretary lying to his colleagues when he made that commitment in Brussels the other day? If not, what does the Chancellor think about it and where does he plan to find the extra £1,000 million per year that would be required to implement the Defence Secretary's pledge—from the poll tax, perhaps?

I hope that the Foreign Secretary, in his patient, dogged way, will succeed in persuading the Defence Secretary and the Prime Minister to abandon these excrescences which disfigure Britain's reputation as much as they damage the prospects of world peace. Absolute priority must be given to achieving agreement on the double zero option in the next few months. I understand that the only serious obstacles left relate to American agreement to allow the Germans to keep on their soil a number of clapped-out Pershing 1A missiles which, it is generally recognised, have no military value, and the insistence of the Soviet Government on preserving 100 SS20 warheads somewhere in Asia, to be matched by 100 American warheads somewhere in the United States but not in Alaska. Surely it is possible and sensible to resolve those problems by agreeing to abolish the Pershing 1As in Europe as well as the 100 warheads outside Europe which, as the Foreign Secretary rightly argued, would make verification of a deal covering the SS20s much more difficult.

The next step in the process will be 50 per cent. cuts in strategic weapons on both sides. The Government endorse that objective in the Gracious Speech even though they know that it will directly put the future of Britain's Trident programme in question because it would be the deep cut which the Government previously set as the condition for putting Trident and the French forces on the bargaining table. We must then—I hope that we are starting now—obtain cuts in conventional forces and the removal of superiorities, not only those that threaten Western security, as the Gracious Speech states, but, equally important if we are to reach agreement, those that threaten Soviet security. What I find intensely depressing about NATO's reaction is that it is already a year since the Russians proposed talks between the military staffs and the Governments of the two sides on the whole area between the Atlantic and the Urals but it was only a week or so ago at Reykjavik that NATO even agreed the procedures through which such negotiations should take place and it has still not agreed a negotiating mandate for those who have to carry out the discussions.

The one certain thing—no doubt this is why NATO has found it so difficult to agree on a mandate—is that any move towards cuts in conventional forces in Europe, attended as they are bound to be by cuts in the battlefield nuclear forces which accompany the conventional forces, will mean fundamental changes in NATO strategy. It will mean moving towards rapid abandonment of the concept

of using nuclear weapons first against a conventional attack and towards a defensive doctrine for a conventional deterrent as a guarantee of security in Europe.

Those movements will be needed in any case. Even the double zero option makes them necessary and I believe that they would have been wise for many years. I believe that NATO may well be in for another period of agonising reappraisal, such as I went through more than 20 years ago when we substituted the strategy of flexible response for the tripwire strategy which was clearly untenable. The flexible response strategy has clearly become untenable, for many reasons which I have often described, and I believe that a new strategic approach will be essential. Indeed, the NATO military have made that clear. I suspect that the negotiations within NATO will be very difficult and will cause serious strains, but they are inevitable.

Because of NATO's failure to reach agreement on a mandate and on a new strategy, I fear that Mr. Gorbachev will continue to make all the running in this area, and I regret that. However, even if NATO continues to be paralysed by institutional arthritis, from which it has suffered for many years, I still believe that the risk of the Soviet Union exploiting NATO's disarray by launching an attack on Western Europe is almost inconceivable. For reasons that I have already given, the real danger of world war arises not from the possibility of deliberate aggression in Europe but from the risk of a chain reaction arising out of conflict somewhere else in the world where the super powers feel that their interests are deeply engaged but where they cannot control events. In other words, the model that we must bear in mind in this new world is not Munich but Sarajevo. I believe that the Russians, like many of us in the West, have already reached that conclusion.

In the coming years, there is bound to be increasing worry about instability in the western Pacific, which may threaten American bases in the Philippines and South Korea, and the way in which America reacts to such instabilities. As the Foreign Secretary rightly said, however, the immediate danger arises in the middle east, though also in south-west Asia, because the conflict between Israel and the Arabs is still unsettled and because of the prolonged, tragic and bloody war between Iraq and Iran. In the past few years, I have often reflected upon the words of my favourite poet:

"And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

The risk that a conflict in the middle east during the period of this Government would drag in the United States and the Soviet Union is very real. I wish that I had more confidence in the will and ability of the American Administration to face those dangers rationally. In the past two years we have seen President Reagan subcontract American policy in the middle east to an unbalanced middle-ranking officer who privatised the policy by involving a motley crew of retired generals and business men of all countries and none. The result was that he allowed Israel to manipulate American policy and involve America in sending arms to Iran. That made America enemies throughout the Arab world. When this seedy imbroglio finally came to light—and we have not heard the end of it yet by any means—President Reagan treated an attack by an Iraqi aircraft on an American destroyer as an excuse for reversing his policy towards Iran and instead threatened to bomb the territory of a country to which he had been supplying arms for the previous three

[Mr. Healey]

years if a local naval commander suspected the possibility of an attack. The rules of engagement given to American ships in the Gulf are horrifically dangerous in the present circumstances.

Mr. Howard Baker, the President's excellent new chief adviser in the White House, suggested the other day that it would be sensible to arrange common action between Russia and the United States to safeguard shipping in the Gulf. I solidly agree with Mr. Baker. However, he was slapped down by someone in Washington within hours of making that suggestion. I believe that his suggestion is the only possible way to move towards greater stability in the Gulf. It would set a very encouraging precedent for the international conference, which would help to tackle the settlement of the Arab Israeli problem which the Foreign Secretary endorsed this afternoon.

It is intolerable that the British Government should appear to go along with the American claim that the Gulf is an American lake or that if Nicaragua is in America's back yard the Gulf is in America's front parlour. I found the comments of the gallant doctor, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), even more extraordinary. He is the leader of that sturdy band of what is it now, four or five—

Mr. Beith: Indeed.

Mr. Healey: I am glad that the hopeful would-be leader of the Liberal party, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), shares my view of the doctor.

I was not entirely surprised to learn that in a speech in Costa Rica, of all places, the other day the right hon. Member for Devonport adopted a new principle of international affairs. He said that any country could regard as its back yard any other country which was as far from its borders as the two most distant points in its own country.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): That is like dealing with the Liberals.

Mr. Healey: On this occasion my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), as so often—well, perhaps occasionally—is absolutely right.

If we accept the Owen doctrine for international affairs, because the distance between Tallinn and Vladivostok is 11,000 miles, the Soviet Union can rightly claim not only the whole of Western Europe but all of the Indian subcontinent and most of Africa as its own back yard.

I suspect that the Foreign Secretary and some of his advisers, who are listening like members of a harem to this debate as it proceeds—they are enjoying it but remain mute—will recognise that a few traces of Iragua or Iranamok—I cannot remember which is the best word—have crept into the Foreign Office. I hope that the extent to which the Foreign Secretary is allowing an organisation which calls itself Keeny Meeny Services—a phrase that I remember well from my many visits to Aden in the old days—to send weapons to Afghanistan and Nicaragua and to help the Singhalese Government to suppress its Tamil population will allow him to recognise that such extravagance is very dangerous in the modern world.

In the United States, Congress is allowed to probe to the bottom of such activity. In our country the Foreign Secretary simply tells us blandly that it is not customary

to give any details. One job for the House in the coming years will be to insist that the Select Committees get to the bottom of some of these activities because I believe that they can only obstruct the development of rational policies to deal with these very dangerous parts of the world.

I conclude with my main theme. It is now recognised in Washington and Moscow that nuclear weapons are not only immoral but unusable. That recognition has produced a historic reversal in the Soviet doctrine on world affairs which offers us the first real prospect in history of ending the arms race and basing international security on some kind of world society. I believe that Britain has the experience that qualifies her to play a leading role in that process. We have as great a national interest in its success as any country.

I hope that the Foreign Secretary will help to ensure that the Prime Minister's unholy passion for nuclear missiles is not allowed to overrule our clear national interests and responsibilities in that regard. If he succeeds in that endeavour, we shall do everything possible to support him. If he does not attempt to do that, we shall unremittingly and mercilessly force a change.

10.47 am

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): It is with some trepidation that I speak in this debate on the Gracious Speech. Even after the excellent advice that the new boys receive from Mr. Speaker and many of the old hands that we should wait a bit before speaking, there are always a few of us who cannot restrain our enthusiasm.

It is a great privilege to succeed Sir David Crouch, as he now is. He was a very popular constituency Member, as was evidenced by the large number of people on the doorsteps of the constituency who told me that they hoped that I would work as hard for them as David did over the past 21 years. I also know that David was a popular Member of this House. As chairman of the Inter-Parliamentary Union he had friends in all parties. It was typical of the man that his penultimate important action in the House was to arrange for a bust of that great Socialist Nye Bevan to be unveiled in the autumn. I say penultimate because his ultimate move in the view of all of us in Canterbury was his courageous commentary on the deep unhappiness felt in Canterbury about the Channel tunnel—a subject to which I hope you will allow me to return, Mr. Speaker, in a week or two.

The constituency of Canterbury consists of the city of Canterbury, the town of Whitstable and a number of lovely villages set in the heart of the garden of England. The city is of course the principal seat of English Christendom. It is also the home of the Buffs and the Queen's Regiment. Whitstable is a historic fishing town which has become the home of many retired people. Less is known about the industrial side of the constituency. Over the past 15 years we have had enormous success on our trading estates in the development of small businesses. One of these, which has now become a rather larger business, captured a major order exporting electrical parts to Taiwan a few weeks ago.

Sir David Crouch and I have shared an interest in the Territorial Army for many years. He chose to join the TA in 1938. Within a year his service was transformed into war service and he served with great distinction. I thank God that my generation have not had to face that, and that is why defence is my greatest single political interest.

Before I go on to speak about defence I should like to relate a slightly lurid personal story. The proudest moment in my election campaign was when I opened the door and a man said to me, "Good grief, you must be the old bastard's son." I said, "No, I am his grandson." The man that he was talking about was Clifford Brazier, who in 1932 was running a cement works in Kent. At the request of the Ministry of Defence he set up a specialist unit, the Kent Fortress Royal Engineers, a specialist Territorial Army unit. In war, it proved itself to be no "grandad's army." In 1940, during the four weeks of utter confusion around Dunkirk, the members of the unit crossed the Channel in small parties and attacked and destroyed every major oil installation from the banks of the Seine to Rotterdam.

I have listened to the illustrious previous speakers talking on the high ground of foreign and strategic policy, but I should like to touch on the less controversial area of defence procurement. I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey). He and successive Secretaries of State for Defence have made enormous efforts to modernise and improve defence procurement. Among the general public there is a strong feeling that procurement is still wasteful, expensive and inefficient. Last autumn I was privileged to play a small role in a study that my former employers were conducting for a number of defence suppliers. It was to compare the procurement methods of several major Western powers. The most enduring memory of that study was the sheer complexity and difficulty of the issues that faced the procurement teams in all seven of those countries. Many of the difficulties and the apparent mistakes stem from the length of the time scale and the complexity of the technical and military issues involved in the process of procurement itself.

I should like briefly to mention four of the lessons that came out of the study—one positive and three negative. The positive one is that there is a welcome growth in collaboration in defence procurement between the NATO countries. Interestingly, some of the most successful examples are projects like the Harrier GR5 and the third phase of the multiple launch rocket system, the momentum for which came largely from industry.

The second lesson is one that I hope the House will forgive me for mentioning, because I am its youngest and humblest Member. This lesson is slightly worrying for the House. We discovered when looking at the American picture that those projects that had consistently been the least successful were those, such as the Bradley armoured personnel carrier and the DIVAD anti-aircraft system, in which Congress played the greatest role in scrutiny and micro-management. By contrast, some of the best and most successful projects, those which had come in fastest and closest to time and budget, were those which by dint of their high security rating had been managed by project managers without any scrutiny at all.

The lesson from this is not that congressional or parliamentary scrutiny is a bad thing. It is essential that it takes place, but perhaps the method of scrutiny used in these long-term projects needs to be different in the defence sector from the method in other sectors. I should like to give a specific example of that. In two or three of his reports the Comptroller and Auditor General reported to the Select Committee that the Ministry project managers were responsible for breaking the laid down procedures for completing each step of development

before going on to the next one. I can tell him that the reason why that occurred in six out of the 10 projects that he examined and reported on in this document is that any weapons system that contains built-in test equipment must involve some jumbling of stages of procurement. There was a five-year delay on Rapier because the project team tried to do it without completing production on the other phases before developing the built-in test equipment. However, the use of built-in test equipment is one area in which much money can be saved in the long run.

The third lesson that emerged was about the value that has undoubtedly come from the increase in competition that took place under the previous two Secretaries of State for Defence. Along with the better climate has come serious reservations, and I should like to mention one of them. It is essential that when we go out to competition and seek fixed-price contracts we look for value not just in the front-end price. When we compare our warship programme with the Dutch programme, it is a little upsetting to find that, by spending a little more money earlier on various automated systems to save manpower, the Dutch have come up with vessels which, in the long run, are cheaper to operate. For this reason it is essential that we take the broadest possible view about assessing value and do not look just at the front-end buying price.

That brings me to my fourth and final point on defence procurement. Every successful organisation that I looked at when I was training as a management consultant, whether they were Japanese industrial giants or a retail company such as our own Marks and Spencer, had one characteristic in common. At the same time as trying to keep its overhead costs down, it allowed itself to be lavish in expenditure in marketing and procurement.

The people in the Ministry of Defence who tell the other people in the Ministry what the customer, the user, our soldiers, sailors and airmen need are the operational requirements staff. I need hardly tell the House that procurement staff consist of the project teams and the research establishments in the procurement executive and their opposite numbers in industry.

It saddens me to know that under successive Governments both those areas have suffered heavy cuts in manning. Those cuts cost money in the long run; they do not save money. In summary, defence procurement is critical and terrifyingly complex. We are making progress, but we might make more if we centred it more firmly on the needs of the user and ensured that at all stages we had adequate manning to carry out what we are trying to do. This will ensure that our soldiers, sailors and airmen of the next century are properly equipped.

10.57 am

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I congratulate the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on his maiden speech. He obviously spoke as an expert in his chosen subject. I also congratulate him on choosing such an early occasion to do so. It is good advice to young Members of Parliament to do that. I followed it myself when I arrived in the House half a century ago, or whatever time it was. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could convey our good wishes to his predecessor who had a very high reputation in this House for his independence and his readiness at all times to disobey Government Whips, even newly appointed Government Whips. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will follow his predecessor's example.

[Mr. Michael Foot]

My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) said that he was not accustomed to swan-songs. I am glad to know that his speech was nothing of the sort. In oratorical terms, it might be said that he follows a kind of flexible response strategy and adapts his invective to suit the immediate target. He usually does it with wonderful skill, as he did today. One of the most serious tragedies of the recent election was that my right hon. Friend is no longer dealing with the foreign affairs of this country at such a critical moment, because he is better qualified to do so than anyone else in the House. He has accumulated knowledge over many years. People have sometimes said that he is capable only of using a bludgeon. However, I assure all concerned that he can use every type of weapon, suited to every circumstance.

My right hon. Friend and I started out in the House at much the same time, although I arrived a little earlier. The closer I saw him in Cabinet and elsewhere, the higher became my estimate of his capacities and of the wonderful service that he has done for the Labour party and the Labour movement, which he has served so loyally for many years in the past and which he will no doubt continue to serve for many years to come. I hope that there will be an election from which he will emerge to give his advice to the next Foreign Secretary, if he is not finally recalled to perform that task himself at a critical moment. No words can be too strong in offering him our thanks for what he has done for our party and country. His speech today should be read all over the country because it showed all his wisdom, courage and capacity to reflect. The subtlety of his intelligence is as important as its vitality, and he showed all of those characteristics today.

I turn now to two matters which my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East touched on to some degree, and which were omitted from the Queen's Speech. However, first I should like to refer to another aspect of the Gracious Speech, because, coming from the constituency that I represent, it would be wrong not to comment on the reference in the Queen's Speech to the so-called "special regard" that the Government are to have for the cities. I cannot help thinking that that phrase must have been written by Lord Young. No one who did not have Lord Young's gift for sanctimonious hypocrisy could have put such a phrase in the Queen's Speech.

It is said that there will be "special regard" for the inner cities from a Government who, among their first measures in 1979, set out to inflict injury upon injury on the inner cities. First, they removed a large part of the physical and financial resources that had been provided by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), and the financial support for the inner cities that was provided in the last Budget of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East. My right hon. Friends provided a plan to give finances and resources to try to assist the inner cities and especially the local authorities in their work. All that was dismantled within two or three years. Indeed, many of the tax concessions that were made in the first wicked years of the Tory Administration were made possible by the money that was taken from the inner cities.

I speak with special feeling about that because we in the valleys of Wales suffered, and still suffer, the same problems and difficulties as the inner cities as a result of the Government's actions. We suffer the same

consequences of what the Government have inflicted upon us, and the same consequences of losing the money that they took from us, but the Government now talk about having "special regard".

The first thing that the Government should do for the inner cities and valley towns is to restore the money that they took from us. If they did that in their next Budget, huge resources would be made available for us. I am not saying that that would be sufficient, because the situation has become so serious. There has been 20 per cent. unemployment year after year and the consequences of that are felt as much in the valley towns as in the inner cities. Those consequences were described eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) yesterday, and he referred to the possible political consequences of allowing them to continue. The Government should set out now to restore the money that was taken from us and they should start to listen to the local authorities.

Part of the difficulty arose from the insensate hostility to local democracy with which the Tory Government have acted and with which they are apparently acting now. They have the idea that in some way the city slickers always know best how to deal with such matters. We want the restoration of the rights of locally elected authorities so that they will have the financial resources to do the job that they are crying out to do. The Government could start by restoring the hundreds of millions of pounds that they took from us. They should provide that and should not seek to conceal their intentions behind their hypocritical statement that they will have "special regard" to the inner cities. The Government's actions on the inner cities will play an important part in this Parliament and they should start with a restitution of the money that they have taken from us.

I turn now to foreign affairs. I suppose that the first omission may be excusable because the document to which I refer was published only this week by the Commonwealth Secretariat. It is entitled "Towards a Commonwealth of Learning: A Proposal to create a University of the Commonwealth for Co-operation in Distance Education". The foreword is signed by the Secretary-General at Marlborough House, Shridath Ramphal. He wrote:

"It is with a sense of excitement that I commend this Report both to Commonwealth Governments and to the wider Commonwealth of all thinking people".

The document is one of the major initiatives that has been proposed in the history of the Commonwealth. I should have thought that the Government would know enough about it to have wanted to give their support to such a proposition in the Queen's Speech. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) on her appointment and hope that she will respond to that document today and say that the Government not only welcome it but that they will provide the resources to enable it to be put into effect. I hope also that she will say that the proposals outlined in the document will have the fullest financial and every other type of support from the Government and that the entire project will be carried through in the most imaginative manner.

The document sets out the way in which the special knowledge that we have in this country, thanks to the development of the Open university, should be used throughout the entire Commonwealth. Thanks to the establishment of the Open university we have a greater

knowledge of such matters than any other country. The Open university is the biggest university in Europe and the biggest of the Government's training agencies. It has a greater knowledge of the technology that can be used in spreading university education than any other university in the world. It is under the chairmanship of Lord Briggs, who has special experience as its head. There is now a recommendation and a proposition whereby all that knowledge could be used throughout the Commonwealth to transform the possibilities of university education during the next 10 to 15 years. I repeat that this initiative comes from the developments made in this country.

The first person who fought for the Open university was Lord Wilson of Rievaulx when he was Prime Minister. Jennie Lee was the person who carried it through and insisted that if we were to have an Open university it should be founded on the basis of the highest possible academic standards. She said that they should prevail from the beginning and that the resources must be made available to enable that to happen. That was done in this country at the end of the 1960s. There were many financial difficulties but they were all overcome.

It is thanks to the fact that the Open university was launched in that way that it has now become the largest university in the country and our most successful training agency. It is far more successful than any of the institutions that the Government have sought to proffer. Although the Government have been criticised as being ungenerous in the way in which they have assisted the Open university—they have held it back and forced it to increase its fees and that has curtailed the number of students that can be accommodated—each year more and more people of all ages apply for its qualifications and for entry to the Open university. I hope that the Government will begin to think differently about it, especially in view of their appalling record during the past seven or eight years over the treatment of universities in general.

I hope that the Government will start this Parliament in an entirely new way, first, by saying that they will provide full facilities to the Open university; then, when they see the wide possibilities of extending university education throughout the world and how beneficial it would be for the English language, which is our greatest possession, I hope that they will give full-scale backing to the proposal. They should have considered the matter already, and I hope that the Minister of State will remedy that this afternoon when she replies to the debate.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East said, the Government should be alarmed at the way in which debates developed during the election campaign and the way in which the Prime Minister put the case. My right hon. Friend has already dealt with that effectively, especially with the appalling speech made by the Prime Minister on television in Moscow, which was a recipe for spreading nuclear weapons all over the world, not for securing agreement on their reduction. But those who noted what was presented to the House just before the election will have been prepared for that speech. The Defence White Paper has not yet been debated, but if all the doctrines enunciated in it were carried into effect it would be impossible to have all the arms control agreements to which the Government say they are attached and which my right hon. Friend outlined so well today.

Three or four pink pages in the White Paper purport to give a history of the Soviet Union and say how we should deal with Mr. Gorbachev and his proposals. My right hon. Friend underlined the importance of those matters. But this is a puerile treatment of Soviet history. It purports to be an account of events in the Soviet Union on the 70th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. I searched through it to see what it said about the second world war, when the Soviet Union was our ally, and it was hard to discover. But I do not wish to mislead the House in any way. It states:

"In more recent times, Western intervention during the Russian civil war and, later, the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, with its appalling toll of 20 million Soviet dead, reinforced the obsession."

The obsession is that they might be invaded. Of course, it is something more than an obsession. It was a reality in this century, and it greatly affects Soviet thinking. No civil servant would have put his name to this section of the defence document. It might have been written by the Secretary of State for Defence, but my guess is that the author was Jeffrey Archer. They called him back and asked him to write the history of the Soviet Union.

Anyone who thinks that I am straying from the facts should read the document for himself. The conclusion is that we must be ultra-suspicious in dealing with propositions that come from the Soviet Union. It overlooks the few sentences which refer to an important period in British history, when the Soviet Union and Britain had a similar interest, just as we have now. But from listening to the Prime Minister's statement in Moscow, no one would have dreamt that that similar interest was being underlined—especially when she rejected any proposal that might have sustained the non-proliferation treaty.

An important omission from the Queen's Speech is any reference to the non-proliferation treaty or to the necessity of stopping the spread of nuclear weapons into other countries. As my right hon. Friend said, if the Prime Minister's doctrine was adopted, it would mean tearing up the non-proliferation treaty which we have signed. During the election, the Prime Minister was asked whether she still abided by the treaty, and she tried to claim that she does.

The last time that I was part of a deputation to the Foreign Secretary, he said that the British Government adhered to the non-proliferation treaty and wished to sustain it. I had just returned from India, whose Prime Minister stressed to me with all the power at his command—he has many terrible difficulties to face—that a major hazard is that there might be a development of nuclear weapons in the Indian subcontinent or in Asia. He stressed how dangerous it would be if Pakistan was encouraged to develop nuclear weapons. When I put that to the Foreign Secretary, he confirmed that the British Government are committed to the non-proliferation treaty. But it is impossible to be committed to the non-proliferation treaty and at the same time to the Defence White Paper, which would breach the treaty in many aspects. If it was carried into effect, it would be hopeless for the Government to believe that they could sustain the non-proliferation treaty.

The treaty is in enough danger. International conferences are held every five years to discuss how the non-proliferation process shall be sustained, and on each occasion the safeguards have looked weaker. At the next conference, any possibility of stopping the proliferation of

[Mr. Michael Foot]

nuclear weapons may be ended. Despite what the Government say, they are doing nothing to sustain it. Indeed, anyone who examines the non-proliferation treaty carefully will see that the Government are in breach of it with this White Paper, which underlines the necessity for a nuclear deterrent in defence of this country and others. That breaches the spirit of the treaty. It would be impossible to ensure that all the countries which are about to get nuclear weapons would support the non-proliferation treaty if we went ahead with the sort of programme contained in the White Paper.

All of us hope that we can stop those problems arising and that there will be an international agreement. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East has spelt out far more clearly than the Foreign Secretary is allowed to do by the Prime Minister the conditions on getting such an agreement at this historic moment. It would be a tragedy if the opportunity was lost. Some of us recall the equally important proposals put forward by Khrushchev, although they were by no means comparable in imagination. They did not go as far as the proposals now before the world. We have the chance to make a much more adventurous settlement of the use of nuclear weapons than we have ever had. It is a real opportunity for disarmament. If it was neglected or abandoned, we would face a very dark world — a world described eloquently by my right hon. Friend at the beginning of his speech.

My right hon. Friend's outline of the way in which we should negotiate is right. It is the basis on which the Labour party fought the election and sought to present these matters to the electorate.

I believe that there still may be a danger from the United States, although I agree with my right hon. Friend that we should welcome the speeches that President Reagan has made on this subject. However, that does not alter the fact that there are considerable forces in the United States, there may also be some similar elements in the Soviet Union, who do not want to see agreement. They would rather see the arms race continue. That has been the case on some previous occasions when we have almost come to the eve of a general agreement but when there have been some developments — an accident, an airline flying over the Soviet Union or the destruction of an aeroplane. In later years some incidents have been revealed as manufactured incidents. Such things have occurred on previous occasions to destroy the atmosphere of détente and the atmosphere of disarmament.

I hope that we can guard against such developments now. Nobody can say that such ideas are fanciful, especially as my right hon. Friend has described how the American Government are not in full control of many of the most essential departments of their Government. I trust that what has been said by my right hon. Friend will be accepted by the House. The way that my right hon. Friend has spoken is the way in which Britain should be speaking in these negotiations. If Britain does think in such terms, we may play our proper part in guiding nations towards what could be the greatest settlement since nuclear weapons were invented.

11.21 am

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I do not wish to follow the speech of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) in any great detail, but he mentioned the Gracious Speech and its proposals on inner cities.

I warmly welcome the Government's new initiatives for the inner cities, but I admit to being cautious. The right hon. Gentleman and I have seen exciting new initiatives from Labour and Conservative Governments, but we have not noticed that the problems of the inner cities have been ameliorated in a manner that we would like.

I should also like to touch briefly on the reference made to the Soviet Union by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent. I believe that at this stage we have every reason to be extremely cautious about the new leadership of that country. I would like to see some good will gestures coming from Russia. An obvious starting point would be Afghanistan. That country has 5 million refugees out of a total population of 7 million and there are still more than 100,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan. A decision by the Soviet Union on Afghanistan would be an obvious gesture to the West if Mr. Gorbachev wishes to get our relationship on a better basis. What about those persecuted Christians who are so numerous that no one has a true idea of the numbers involved? What about the 300,000 tonnes of offensive chemical weapons? What on earth do they need that amount for? Perhaps those are the sort of areas in which we can look for some response from the Soviet Union.

A debate on international affairs and defence matters presents one with an astonishing menu and we have to pick and choose in the few minutes that are allowed to us once the great men have taken up their half-hour plus. I want to confine myself to the middle east and to two small islands.

I hope that the Government will be unsparing in their attempts to get the Israeli forces of occupation in southern Lebanon to move out of that country. They have no conceivable right to be there so long after their last invasion of the Lebanon. It is monstrous that UNIFIL — the international force in the Lebanon — that is supported from our British bases in Cyprus is not allowed up to the internationally recognised boundary with Israel.

I also hope the Government will be unceasing in their attempts to find out what is happening in those prison camps that Israel has set up in south Lebanon. Amnesty International has produced an extremely good report on what is apparently going on in one of those camps called Khiam. We, as Members of Parliament and individual citizens, must rely on the Government of the day to help us to find out what is happening and to protest in the strongest language on our behalf to the Israeli authorities. It is also monstrous that individual Lebanese citizens are taken into Israel and kept in captivity with the absolute minimum of any form of legal process.

I wish to turn to the extraordinary and exciting prospect of an international conference on the middle east. Will the United States play the part that it will need to play if we are to make progress? I briefly intervened in the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, because it seemed essential to me that the Palestine Liberation Organisation should be invited to take part in that conference.

A couple of years ago I visited the occupied West Bank and Gaza. In the slums and the degradation and despair

of those settlements I met Palestinian after Palestinian who made it absolutely clear that, as far as they were concerned, the PLO represented them. The King was not their representative, but according to eight out of 10 people the PLO did. If we are to make progress on the crucial issue of the middle east and the new Palestinian state, we must involve the representatives of the Palestinian people. I hope that my Government will not continue to duck this point as they have been inclined to do in previous years.

Of course, Syria must be involved in the search for a peaceful settlement. That brings our attention to the fact that we have still been unable to restore diplomatic relations with Syria. That country has a major role to play in the middle east and is of great importance to that area. I believe that we were absolutely right to expel the Syrian ambassador and his staff, but there is a French saying, "To govern is to foresee." Before long I hope that we shall see the resumption of low level diplomatic relations between our country and Syria.

Some of my colleagues are in favour of cutting off diplomatic relations, but I say to them that the countries with which we most need diplomatic relations are not nice, sensible places like Switzerland. Any fool could be ambassador in Switzerland, and I would volunteer my services tomorrow. It is the froward children of the international community, the awkward squad, and those who treat their citizens abominably with whom we need diplomatic relations. Those are the countries where British subjects need some protection and help and where British business men need support. I call upon the Government to do all they can to resume diplomatic relations with Syria ere long.

During the election campaign we were all conscious of the mounting tension in the Gulf. I am a strong supporter of the United Nations. The only thing wrong with the United Nations is its 160 individual members who do not use that organisation properly. I could not help but notice that when the multinational force withdrew from Beirut some years ago the British Government handed the problem over to the United Nations. We had tried, but it was all very difficult; the Americans had tried, but it was all very difficult. It was left to the United Nations, which, in previous years, has not been our most blue-eyed boy. I would like to see the Government show some support for the concept of United Nations control of the waterways of the Gulf. It is curious that at the moment there are American, British and Soviet warships accompanying—I gather that that is the OK word, rather than escorting—international ships going about their legal and proper duties in the Gulf.

I do not believe that the United States alone or the European Community or NATO should have responsibility for such shipping. It must be controlled by an international organisation. I look to the United Nations to play a part, and I shall be interested to hear the Minister's thoughts on greater UN involvement in the Gulf when she replies this afternoon.

In the previous Parliament I spent a considerable amount of time talking about the south Atlantic. In March 1967 the then Labour Government agreed in principle, subject to certain conditions, to cede sovereignty of the Falklands to the Argentines. A large number of people in Britain are quite unaware of that fact. It was a watershed in the dispute. Of course, in doing so, the Government drew attention to the fact that they were thinking of giving

up sovereignty, and that, if they did so at some time, they thought that Argentina would be the correct country to receive that sovereignty.

Only a few months before the invasion of the islands in 1982, when we now know that the invasion had been planned by the junta, the Conservative Government, with the noble Lord Carrington as Foreign Secretary, carried out talks in New York. They were prepared to talk about sovereignty in those discussions. We knew about the nature of the junta, the appallingly repressive regime that it was, and that naval helicopters were being tasked to throw nuns into the River Plate from 1,000 ft. I am not criticising either my Government or the Labour Government, yet there were various forces and factors at work in the south Atlantic that led those respective Governments to those particular positions. I say this to my Front Bench. I am thinking of the military, political, economic and diplomatic factors. Those forces and factors are still at work.

The most recent vote that we had on the south Atlantic in the United Nations was the worst rebuff for British diplomacy since the Suez campaign. Each year we have to marshal our forces to seek support for our viewpoint. I like to think that there are those in the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence who say that in due course we must have a better relationship with Argentina, and we must restore diplomatic relations. There are only some 35 countries in this world which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I would regard as having some sort of democratic structure. Argentina happens to be one of them. Not only has it restored democracy but it has since had a successful election, which the British people hardly noticed. If we cannot even have diplomatic relations with such a country, why on earth are we wasting time on some of the abominable countries where we are happy to have an ambassador, an embassy and a flag?

I do not want to talk about the long-term solutions. An organisation with which I work, called the South Atlantic Council, has produced several academic proposals, many of which would give the Falkland islanders better prospects than they now have in their present artificial setting. But I hope that we shall see in this Parliament a serious attempt by the Government to show some flexibility and understanding of the problem and to restore diplomatic relations with the democratic Government of Argentina.

Mr. Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): My hon. Friend has painted rather a rosy picture of Argentina at present. Would he like to add a brief comment on the present situation, where all those people who were involved in the hideous crimes that my hon. Friend has been cataloguing have been given a blanket amnesty by that Government?

Mr. Townsend: I do not want to follow my hon. Friend too far in that direction. We can all recognise the gigantic task that faces a democracy in those circumstances. Does one wish to make alien a whole echelon of one's defence forces? For how many years must one go on prosecuting one's citizens? It might be realistic to draw a line somewhere. I would not like to say whether the line is drawn in the correct place. However, the Government of President Alfonsín have shown great courage in what they have been doing in that direction since he became President.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer) and I have considerable interest in Cyprus. It was

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a Conservative Government who became a guarantor of a free, sovereign, independent Cyprus. I do not believe that we have fulfilled our obligations in the way that most hon. Members would expect. It would be monstrous and, I hope, unthinkable to recognise the Turkish regime in northern Cyprus when it still has some 25,000 troops occupying the north and when it is still allowing at least a similar number of Anatolian settlers to take up the farms in the north that have been seized from the Greek Cypriots. We have an obligation to work for a settlement through the United Nations and the Secretary-General, who has great knowledge of that subject. I like to think that we shall strain every sinew over the next four years to try to achieve a settlement of an admittedly extremely difficult problem.

I should like to end where I began. When I was first in Cyprus as a young soldier, I went to Beirut, courtesy of the Royal Navy. I remember how struck I was with the Lebanon of those days. There were marvellous universities, schools, roads and banks. It was the Switzerland of the middle east. To be honest, I was more interested in the night clubs and the contents therein, but I shall not go into that. But it was a prosperous, successful nation. I was invited back in 1982 to observe the presidential elections, with colleagues from different parties. I was appalled by the damage that had overtaken that prosperous and successful country. Surely there is a simple lesson there. While that country may have had good universities, schools and roads, it did not have good defence forces. The Syrians, Israelis and Palestinians have all moved into that territory to conduct their operations and campaigns on that nation's soil. If we want peace, good universities, schools, and so on, we must be prepared to defend our own borders in the most appropriate way. The noble Lord Home, when he was Foreign Secretary, used the phrase, "to deal in conciliation from a basis of strength." That has been the traditional approach of the Conservative Government. I look forward to it continuing over this Parliament.

11.37 am

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I thank the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) for his helpful speech. I hope that hon. Members will understand that I want to talk about my constituency, Halifax.

First, I pay tribute to the single-mindedness, some might say obsession, that my predecessor, Roy Galley, showed towards the problem of litter and rubbish in Halifax. Even in his last few weeks as a Member of Parliament he was to be seen on the precinct with his black plastic bag, cleaning up rubbish.

My constituency, my home town, of Halifax was until 1979 a thriving northern manufacturing town with a diversity of industries of which many areas would have been proud. We had a long history behind us. For centuries the people of Halifax had produced goods to sell in the market places of this country, and, since the industrial revolution, in the markets of the world. Before 1979 we were a proud and highly skilled people. We produced some of the finest carpets known. Our expertise in the manufacture of machine tools was legend and we had an excellent record of passing on those skills, through good apprenticeships, to the next generation. That was how it stood. I emphasise the past tense.

Since 1979 we have lost 9,500 jobs in that small town, mainly in the manufacturing sector. We have gained only 1,250 jobs in return. Most of them have been in the service industries, and many have been low-paid and part-time. That means that well over 8,000 jobs in manufacturing have gone. In place of the highly skilled and rewarding jobs we have been offered 1,000 youth training scheme places and 1,500 on community programme schemes. That minor palliative has its cost, for by and large those schemes replace existing real jobs.

In Halifax we have another record—the lowest wage levels in west Yorkshire. West Yorkshire has another record—it pays the lowest wages in the country. We have a subdued and acquiescent work force frightened of losing their jobs and only too willing to work for low pay. We have very low-cost housing and low factory start-up and operating costs compared with other parts of the country, so if the prophets of the present Government's policies had had it right, Halifax would be blossoming. The reverse is the truth and no amount of Government fiddling with the figures can hide the reality. What we get is a succession of Ministers telling us that the upturn is just around the corner. They all came to Halifax during the election campaign. The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) was chased out of town. One of them told us to work for less, and the logic of that escapes me. Report after report says that we are the lowest paid area in the country, yet firm after firm is moving out.

What are the Government going to do? I listened intently to the Queen's Speech yesterday. What will the Government do for towns such as Halifax? If we look at the past, we see something of what they planned for us. One scheme that was launched in Halifax was the UK 2000 scheme, of which hon. Members may have heard. That brings us back to the subject of cleaning up and rubbish. That well-known millionaire Mr. Richard Branson breezed into town: he did not bring his balloon, but there was plenty of hot air. The press was there, and the television cameras were there. It was a huge public relations exercise, but what they were covering had all the hallmarks of a cartoon. Rocks were brought in by lorry, a couple of YTS trainees were drafted in and pictures were taken of Mr. Branson holding a pick, but the picture was totally false. We were offered gimmicks. I do not think that even now the UK 2000 scheme employs more than a dozen people on community programme schemes, yet it was a national launch. It was an insult to the intelligence of the people of Halifax.

We have a perfectly good local authority with the expertise to clean up, to improve the environment and to provide leisure services. If the millions of pounds in rate support grant that have been taken away from us could be given back the local authority would be able to do that, and Mr. Branson could go and fly his balloon quite happily.

One thing is certain: a healthy manufacturing sector is essential if we are to pay our way in the world. The decline of towns such as Halifax has been severe and intensely damaging to the British economy. Nationally, our poor industrial performance has been obscured by the huge contribution made by North sea oil. How will we avert a major crisis when the oil runs out? We should be planning and investing, but I heard nothing in the Queen's Speech that gave me hope that investment would return to the manufacturing sector.

I know that Halifax is not unique. Many of my comrades' constituencies have suffered huge job losses, but we have an added burden. In the early 1980s we lost assisted area status, and that has cost us 1,850 jobs in the past 12 months alone due to firms moving out of the area or investing in other areas. We are surrounded by areas that are in receipt of grant, and we cannot compete on the same basis. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) visited our area during the campaign he called it the hole in the middle of the doughnut, and that is how we feel. We had another kick in the teeth last year when the Government withdrew urban aid, which is desperately needed in Halifax. I could show hon. Members the worst slum housing in the country in north Halifax. The voluntary sector needs grants such as urban aid, and so does the council. However, the aid has been withdrawn.

What should the Government be doing? I read in detail the Select Committee report on overseas trade which looked at other countries that have been more successful and have kept up their success in manufacturing trade. The report put forward some excellent recommendations. It said that what we need is a sense of national purpose, but how can we have any national purpose when there is a gulf between the north and the south, when the employed and the unemployed are pitted against each other and when greed and self-interest are put forward as virtues?

We need links between the different groups in society, said the Select Committee report. But what were we promised yesterday? We were promised more trade union-bashing, and during the election campaign there were attacks by leading politicians on minority groups and allegations that people are part of the "loony Left" if they stand up and defend those minority groups, which I am proud to say that my party does defend.

The Select Committee report mentioned the need for a long-term view, when we have the free-market philosophy that failed in the 19th century and is failing the British people yet again. The Committee put forward the idea that we needed investment in education and training. We have the worst trained work force in Europe, and, listening to the Queen's Speech yesterday, I wondered what on earth would happen to education in the future.

The Prime Minister talks about being free to choose, but what choice is there for those who cannot pay? What will be the options for those on low incomes and the unemployed? There was talk about the need for partnership between local government and central Government, but what did we hear yesterday? We heard further proposals to weaken local government. Let us look at the Government's record on any kind of partnership. If people vote for Labour councils, the Government abolish those councils. That is what happened to the county councils and the GLC. The Government's aim is to cut off financial support from such councils, to discredit them and make them unpopular. And what is planned for the future? The wholesale privatisation of services.

Finally, the Select Committee talked about the financial institutions playing a major role in regenerating industry. The City of London has abandoned the British people when it comes to the industrial sector. Last year only £1 in every £50 on the stock market went to fund fresh investment by industry. That speaks volumes for the impoverished north and for the patriotism of those who own the wealth in this country.

Unless the Government start listening to Members of Parliament like me who represent towns such as Halifax, unless they stop turning their back on manufacturing, and unless they are prepared to help towns such as mine and to restore assisted area status where it has been removed, I believe that times look even bleaker for our increasingly divided country. How on earth can any responsible Government tolerate that?

11.46 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I congratulate warmly the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on her maiden speech. She presented effectively and sincerely the problems that confront so many northern communities and, indeed, communities in other parts of the United Kingdom that are among the have-nots in our current social divide. What she said has been echoed on the doorsteps by voters, not only in my constituency but in many of the constituencies in the north and the midlands that I visited during the election campaign.

The feelings that the hon. Lady echoed were so widely voiced, and so widely reflected in the votes given to parties other than the Conservatives, that the Government must listen carefully in the course of this Parliament. The Gracious Speech gave no evidence that they are ready to listen, but they must listen to hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Halifax who represent parts of the country that are facing severe problems. I congratulate the hon. Lady on making her case so effectively, and I wish her well during her time in the House.

Let me also add a note of congratulation to the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on his maiden speech, not least because he was my Conservative opponent in the general election before last. I sought to console his successor with the thought that being my Conservative opponent is a ladder to success, and that in a subsequent election he, too, might find himself successful elsewhere: indeed, the House contains both a previous Conservative and a previous Labour opponent of mine. I congratulate the hon. Member for Canterbury on his maiden speech, with the knowledge that it brought to the debate on defence procurement. I also share the high regard that he expressed for his predecessor, Sir David Crouch, who made such a great contribution to the House, and with whom I travelled to Moscow, along with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) and Lord Whitelaw last year in the first in the round of discussions that paved the way for greater understanding between our two countries. Sir David played a large part in making that visit, and the earlier visit of Mr. Gorbachev to this country, such a success.

I congratulate also the hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker). Her preferment was nearly snatched from her by the electorate, but I console her with the thought that I started with a majority of 57 and that the opportunities that I have enjoyed since then could so easily have been denied to me. But she made it and she received the promotion that she well deserved. We look forward to her contributions in her new role.

I wish the right hon. Member for Leeds, East well. I hope that his early departure from this debate does not mean that we have lost his contribution to many of our debates. I still want to press him on an issue about which I pressed him on many occasions during the election campaign. I am eager to find out whether his conversion from the standpoint that NATO's strategy needs nuclear

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weapons and that some of those weapons need to be based in Britain to the standpoint that NATO does not need nuclear weapons and that any that NATO has should not be based in Britain is of the Damascus variety or of the Vicar of Bray variety. Its timing suggested the latter, but his standpoint is still not clear to me. This morning the right hon. Gentleman made a very good and quite moving speech, but the question is still unanswered. When he reaches the Back Benches I hope that he will feel more free to answer than he felt while carrying the burden of office.

There is no part of the Gracious Speech in which the words so belie reality as those on foreign affairs. It says:

"My Government will stand fully by their obligations to the NATO alliance."

It refers also to

"increasing the effectiveness of the nation's conventional forces."

The United Kingdom defence budget is to fall by 8 per cent. up to 1989-90. During that period there will be considerable pressures on the equipment programme because of the purchase of Trident, and it is inevitable that the NATO obligations to which the Gracious Speech referred will not be satisfied unless something gives.

It would be helpful if the Minister who is to reply to the debate could give us the date of the post-election defence review and tell us what will be its terms. The Defence White Paper said that choices would have to be made, but in anticipation of the election there was no suggestion of what those choices would be—whether it would be the surface fleet orders, or the European fighter aircraft programme.

Furthermore, on the significance of the NATO Ministers' decision to have a 3 per cent. annual increase in defence expenditure, why did the British representative agree to that decision if he did not intend to take part in it, and what is the Government's view of it? It was a very strange decision to make at a time when the Government had made it clear that, having increased defence expenditure over the earlier period, they had now decided to reduce it. There should be a clear statement about that, and also about how and when choices will be made that will result from the Government's insistence on going ahead with the Trident programme.

On the wider issue of arms control we welcome the Prime Minister's conversion to the double zero option. She has moved away from her ridiculous stance that there should be an increase in short-range nuclear weapons held by the West and by Britain to match present Soviet weapon stocks. Those weapons would be of no conceivable military use to us; any such weapons stationed in Britain could be targeted only on our allies in Western Europe and could not conceivably reach the Soviet Union. The Prime Minister now appears to be giving her backing to the double zero option. I hope that that backing remains firm and that there will be no behind-the-scenes resistance to an agreement that, thankfully, the two super powers seem intent upon bringing about. Britain should be assisting that process, not resisting it.

The Gracious Speech also says:

"My Government will play a leading role in the development of the European Community".

The Government are still unable to decide whether the time is ripe for Britain to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. Whenever he is asked about it, the Chancellor of the Exchequer says:

"There is much to be said for fully joining the European monetary system . . . We keep this matter regularly under review. The balance of argument has shifted considerably, but the Government have not yet decided that the time is right." —[Official Report, 6 November 1986; Vol. 103, c. 1072.]

At the beginning of a third term of office for the Prime Minister we are entitled to ask whether we shall ever join the European monetary system and gain the benefits that would flow from it, including lower interest rates. Or is it that the Prime Minister says that as long as she is around Britain will not join the EMS? We ought to know the answer to that question if the Government intend to play a leading role in the development of the European Community.

If we intend to play a leading role in its development, why are we resisting the European Community research programme? Current programmes have been unable to continue because of the British Government's resistance to them. The jobs of 600 to 1,000 scientists are at stake. Participation in programmes on such vital issues as AIDS is at stake. Another meeting is to take place next week at which this matter may be resolved. What will be the Government's stance? Shall we continue to resist a joint European research programme of enormous potential value? That is not playing a leading role in the development of the European Community.

All the indications are that the British Government do not want the European Community to develop, either in its ability to tackle the problems that face Europe or in its ability to run itself democratically by means of a properly and fairly elected European Parliament according to a common system to which we are committed by treaty but which we still resist, and with institutions that are properly accountable to that Parliament.

The Gracious Speech says that the Government will be "seeking more normal relations with Argentina."

That is a subject to which the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) referred. Normal relations with a Government usually include diplomatic relations and a willingness to discuss any issues of common concern without restricting the agenda. The British Government are refusing to have any discussions with the Government of Argentina in which the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands might be discussed. That is quite a different position from insisting that Britain is not prepared to cede that sovereignty or that it insists on retaining certain rights for the Falkland Islanders. The British Government will not discuss the matter. It is not possible to have more normal relations with a country if issues of discussion are excluded from the agenda. It is insulting to the democratic Government of Argentina to say that the British Government will not talk about the subject with them when that same British Government, as was pointed out from the Government Benches, were prepared to consider ceding the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands to a military dictatorship which subsequently attempted to seize them by force. That is an absurd and indefensible position.

The Gracious Speech says that the Government "will fulfil their responsibilities to the people of Hong Kong." That is an issue on which we are entitled to some contemporary comment because there is increasing concern in Hong Kong that the steady if slow developments towards greater democracy in the colony will be arrested before the hand-over date. The first expressions of concern came with the enactment of the new provisions which consolidated and reaffirmed some restrictions on press freedom. Fears are now being

expressed that the development of more elective mechanisms in the Government of Hong Kong will be prevented or resisted. Under British colonial rule, progress towards democracy in Hong Kong has been extremely slow and no one could deny that. But for that progress to be stopped altogether as if it were a requirement of the Sino-British joint declaration is not true to what the declaration says. The way of life is to continue for 50 years and the natural development that was occurring is surely part of that way of life.

We read that Her Majesty's Government will play their full part in the United Nations. What happened to the British membership of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation? The British Government took people out of that United Nations institution, which British scientists established and helped to achieve its early success. The Government have denied themselves an opportunity to play any part in securing a new director-general for UNESCO. They have denied themselves any opportunity to play a part in the reform process and the improvements that are occurring there.

Mr. Jim Spicer: In saying that, is the hon. Gentleman seeking to defend a situation where 80 per cent. of the budget of UNESCO was spent in Paris by Mr. M'Bow and his colleagues?

Mr. Beith: The British Government should play a part in raising the administration of UNESCO up to the standards that it should be, but the Government have denied themselves that opportunity. Is it to be the policy of Her Majesty's Government that if anything is wrong with the international organisations to which we belong—including the United Nations itself, of which one could make many criticisms—they should leave them? Surely we believe in the universality of these international institutions, on which their effectiveness depends, particularly those in which there has been a large British commitment.

In the speech we read that Her Majesty's Government will be seeking "peaceful and lasting solutions to the most difficult international problems."

The middle east is mentioned as one of those problems and I welcome the talks that occurred last week. Unfortunately they were talks with the more reasonable half of the Israeli Government, and that remains a very depressing picture.

One of the specific sectors of difficulty that is mentioned in the speech is that of Afghanistan. We are entitled to a little more comment on that. We should have a clear statement of Government policy on arms for the Afghan freedom fighters and the means by which they reach them. We should not assume so readily, as did the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, that the people who have been driven out of their country and are fighting to have it restored to them are not entitled to be armed in the face of the Soviet occupation. That seemed to be the implication of the right hon. Gentleman's question, but we are entitled to know by what routes the British Government believe it right or proper for arms to reach them and whether the British Government would connive at an abuse of the end-user certificate system or whether they would accept that it is right that there should be channels of arms for those who have resisted the Soviet invasion of their country.

What about central America, which is not specifically mentioned in the Gracious Speech? Today a summit

meeting of the leaders of the central American countries should have begun in order to make further progress on the ARIAS plan and the approach that started with the Contadora process. That meeting is not taking place because the American Government brought pressure to bear on the Government of El Salvador, a particularly frail Government, greatly susceptible to that American pressure. It is the British Government's express view that there should be a peaceful solution to the crisis in central America, yet they have never distanced themselves from the United States' clear violation of that principle. The United States continues to arm, not least by illegal routes which are now the subject of investigation, the Contras who attack the Government of Nicaragua. The British Government have never distanced themselves from that position other than by making a general observation. What is now their view?

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Would it not be helpful also if the British Government announced that they were to investigate the activities of KMS and its funding of mercenary activities in central America and to investigate the illegal export of Blowpipe missiles, which are apparently used by the Contra forces in the war against the democratically elected Government of Nicaragua?

Mr. Beith: Like the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), I have asked the Government several times for clarification on that issue. I am not yet satisfied that there is evidence of Government guilt, but there is sufficient doubt for the matter to need greater clarification.

The Gracious Speech refers to the Government's commitment to

"maintain their substantial aid programme."

Expenditure on the Government's overseas aid programme has gone down from 0.5 per cent. of gross national product to 0.33 per cent. during their term in office. That has occurred at a time when the British people have shown enormous generosity and concern for the peoples of the poorest and hungriest parts of the world. Does maintaining the Government's substantial aid programme mean maintaining that rate of decline? Is that decline to continue? Does it mean keeping aid at its present inadequate level? It certainly cannot mean, by any reading of the text, that we will make any attempt to achieve the United Nations target. All this is happening in the face of problems of mounting gravity.

What will be the Government's attitude to the international debt crisis faced by so many Third world countries? I hope that they will look seriously at the report produced by the all-party group on overseas development, chaired by the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), which was produced just before the election and which perhaps did not gain the attention that it deserved because of other events. I hope that that document and other sensible recommendations will be looked at by the Government, who should be taking a lead in international bodies in seeking an international solution. Mere declarations by banks that they have made provision to write off some portion of their enormous commitment in South America will not meet a crisis of such major proportions.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Does my hon. Friend agree that, apart from considering the

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mounting debt crisis and the need to increase aid, the Government should review their attitude towards full cost fees for overseas students?

Mr. Beith: My hon. Friend is right to remind me that our policy on students in particular and on the work of the British Council and the BBC's Overseas Service is part of our aid and development activity. In recent years, there has been a further reduction in Britain's development work and help for Third world countries, and steps should be taken to remedy that.

At home, the measures in the Gracious Speech will increase rather than reduce social divisions and will greatly increase rather than reduce the centralisation of power in Whitehall. Abroad, they will confirm the Prime Minister's preferred role as an unquestioning devotee of President Reagan rather than as a partner in a mature alliance with the United States. They will confirm the Government's unwillingness to take a lead in making the European Community more effective and more democratic. They underline the insularity of the Government, illustrated in their attitude to UNESCO, the Commonwealth and overseas aid. They do nothing to dispel the fear that the Government are less willing even than the super powers to reduce and eventually get rid of the nuclear armoury.

12.5 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on his excellent maiden speech. I do not wonder that he chose not to wait to make it, because he delivered it with such confidence and grace. I am sure that he will be the envy of many of us who started later and much more tentatively. I wish him well in the House and I am sure that we shall benefit greatly from his presence.

I congratulate, too, the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) and thank her for her kind words about the former hon. Member for Halifax, Mr. Roy Galley, who took a great interest in many things—not just rubbish on the streets of Halifax. He took a real and compassionate interest in the social and health services and made a great contribution to our proceedings. In accordance with the traditions of the House, I shall leave the more controversial aspects of the hon. Lady's speech to be taken up in later debates when, along with other hon. Members, no doubt, I shall enjoy taking issue with her.

I hurry on to the subject raised by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who opened for the Liberal party, at the end of his speech. Like him, I welcome the Queen's Speech, but, unlike him, I welcome it for its determination on the domestic front—the determination to confront the problems of our nation and to find new solutions for them.

For far too long we have failed to do very much to correct our lack of competitiveness and efficiency, with the result that our nation has been unable to afford the level of pensions or the investment in education and the social services to ensure that those in need are looked after to a standard of which we can be proud. The first two terms of the Conservative Government have transformed Britain's economy so that we can claim in some industries that we can offer costs of production lower than those offered by any of our European competitors. Who would have thought, in 1979, that the Ford Motor Company

would be investing in Britain, rather than in Spain or Germany, on the basis of British efficiency? That illustrates the enormous achievements of the British people led by a Conservative Government with a determined, hard-working and straight-talking Prime Minister.

However, Britain is still one of the least prosperous of the European allies. Our wealth now exceeds only that of Spain, Portugal, Greece and Eire. Italy has recently overtaken us in total wealth. We have a long way to go if we are to catch up so that the British people can enjoy a better standard of living, as demanded on the doorsteps during the general election campaign, in health, education, pensions and so on. But, first, Britain must earn the money to afford those services. The British people are now confident that they can do so, given the right economic climate both at home and overseas.

It is the overseas economic climate to which I now address my remarks. The House does not need to be reminded that Britain is a trading nation, which exports 30 per cent. plus of its gross national product—a proportion three times greater than that exported by Japan or even the United States. That means that we depend heavily on the world economic and financial climate. To achieve the aims set out in the Queen's Speech, many of which involve spending more public money, we must work to bring about an expanding world market.

I draw the attention of the House to the recent report of the OECD, which comments on the present economic conditions in the world:

"many of the conditions for faster growth remain favourable: inflation is under control in most countries; corporate financial positions are generally good; interest rates have declined markedly in recent years . . . The fact that, in spite of this, the outlook is not better is due in large part to an apparent weakening of private-sector confidence, related in particular to recent wide swings in exchange rates and uncertainty about their future evolution. For confidence to be restored, it is important for Governments swiftly to implement internationally-agreed commitments in both the macroeconomic and structural policy areas."

The report states:

"The economic situation has deteriorated in recent months, and OECD projections to the end of 1988 point to little improvement. Slow growth, high unemployment and large payments imbalances are likely to persist. Recent downward movements in the dollar, which occurred despite unprecedented interventions in exchange markets, have led to rising inflation expectations and higher interest rates in the United States. These developments, together with the growing tensions in international trade relations and continuing debt problems, have increased the risks of a worsening world economic situation."

That points out the very real dangers that confront us. We might be entering into a serious world economic crisis that could lead to serious economic dislocation and, indeed, make the standard of living worse in this country and in many others. At present, the world market place is not expanding. Indeed, in some areas it is contracting. Many Third world economies are continuing to contract, as they have done since 1982. Instead of investment increasing in such countries, most are paying back more in interest and capital repayments than they are receiving from trade, investment and overseas aid. That means that Britain is not able to expand her exports rapidly enough to many of her traditional Third world markets because they are too poor—and getting poorer—to buy from us. If we can move towards reversing the contraction of our overseas markets, and indeed those of the United States, South America and all other trading nations, we can begin

to solve our unemployment problems more quickly and raise our income to pay for new and radical domestic policies.

Two of the major difficulties in the world market place are the overhang of debt and rising tariff and non-tariff barriers, particularly the latter. To that list I should add two other factors. One involves competing export credit and other means of subsidising exports, which, sadly, is quite often achieved through the aid budgets of countries such as Japan and Italy. In my view, that is much to the disgrace of those countries. The other factor is the volatility of exchange and interest rates, which discourages trade and investment.

On the question of debt, I should like, as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed did, to bring to the attention of the House the all-party group's report on managing Third world debt. It is intended to be an easily read document on a complex subject, designed to produce the political will to tackle the problem and to put it right. It has already attracted the appraisal of no less a figure than Lord Roll of Ipsden, who said that it was the most concise, sound and innovative document on the subject that he had read. I commend it to my colleagues. It could lead to the formation of political opinion in the House and in Britain to make certain that the Government fulfil the commitment in the Queen's Speech to do something more about it.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, who, largely stimulated by the work of the all-party group on overseas development, took up these matters and last April made proposals in relation to the African debt to the development committee of the World Bank and to the interim committee of the International Monetary Fund. Indeed, they took up the proposals again in Venice, with little success, and have submitted them to the Paris Club, which is to report in July. That was an important step. Of course, it was resisted by many other countries such as the United States, but, none the less, Britain is taking a lead in this complex area.

The proposals that my hon. Friend put to the World Bank and the IMF are intended to find a longer-term solution for some of the poorest countries in Africa, by rescheduling debt repayments over a longer period, by limiting interest rates payable to a suggested 8 per cent., and by converting at least bilateral loans to grants. In this matter Britain has taken a much greater lead than any other country that gives bilateral aid. Such action would recognise the impossibility of meeting repayment schedules and interest rates in return for undertakings by the country concerned to adopt economic policies that are likely to lead to growth and, therefore, to a resumption of exports and imports from Britain and other countries.

That initiative will need to be followed up vigorously if it is to gain acceptance, but the process must be taken further. Longer-term solutions to the indebtedness of Argentina, Brazil and Mexico — the largest debtors — must also be sought. It is commonly accepted that the Baker plan has failed to bring about such a settlement, one of the main reasons being that private banks are reluctant to put more good resources into debtor countries, with the result that investment has virtually ceased. The settlement made in Mexico last year is about to break down. The settlement in relation to Brazil has already failed, and that country is paying only part of the interest on a truly stupendous indebtedness of \$103 billion. That is likely to

bring the world financial system, especially banks in the United States and Britain, into serious financial difficulty, with potential knock-on implications for further contraction in world trade.

The IMF has been trying to deal with the problems of those countries but has not been able to do so and is finding itself owed money by countries which cannot repay it. I believe that the IMF is the wrong institution to deal with these matters. I believe that the task should be undertaken by the World Bank, which can take a longer view, but to do so it will need additional resources both in its main financing and in its soft loans to the International Development Association. A reappraisal of the World Bank's lending policies will also be needed to permit at least the rescheduling of some countries' debts if any long-term solution is to be achieved. Ministers at the Foreign Office and the Treasury who are concerned with these matters will have to work extremely hard and vigorously if those adjustments are to be achieved in the time remaining.

I shall not say too much about tariff barriers, save to give two illustrative examples. Non-tariff barriers such as that operated by Japan in relation to Scotch whisky mean that the imported product is taxed so severely as to become an extremely expensive item for local consumers while the local product is not so taxed. I hope that the Foreign Office will also take up vigorously the problem caused by the Government of Kenya, whom we would normally regard as friends, but who have begun to do exactly the same thing. British companies which have invested in Kenya and are producing goods for the liquor market are taxed extremely severely compared with the Kenyan producer recently licensed to operate in that sector. If non-tariff barriers of that kind spread we shall be unable to export even to the richest countries, such as Japan, and world trade will contract, with consequential unemployment and, indeed, starvation in some Third world countries.

There is no more urgent need for action on tariffs than in the agriculture sector. In this context I welcome the assurance that the Government will continue to seek a reduction in agricultural support schemes in the European Community and to discourage, for example, the subsidising of rape seed oil production which has spread beautiful yellow fields across the countryside of Britain at the expense of oil palm producers in some of the poorest countries of the world. We can compete with those countries only if our production is subsidised by the European Community. We should have more respect for our Third world trading partners than to seek to compete with them in that way. We must therefore lower tariff barriers into both developed and developing countries if world trade is to expand.

I want to describe my agenda for the domestic programmes which I believe need additional money if we are to fulfil the needs of our people. These aims can be financed only through an expansion in world trade. First, I believe that it is essential that we continue to seek equal opportunity for all our children in education. We must find additional resources especially for inner city schools to ensure that children there receive the additional skills and resources necessary to make their education equivalent to that enjoyed by children in my constituency in Hertfordshire. It is inequitable that other children receive an education that does not allow them to compete with graduates from schools in my constituency. I

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welcome the initiatives taken by the Government in that area. However, as I have told the Government for many years, to raise the standards they must devote additional resources to inner city schools. There must be more and better qualified school teachers and more resources for computers and technical equipment so that children can be trained and acquire skills.

Secondly, I am certain that we cannot continue to finance the Health Service purely through taxation. We must encourage the British people to enter a universal insurance fund that will be independent of the Government and will be used only for the development of the Health Service. We will not spend anything like the required resources on the Health Service unless we have such a fund.

Thirdly, I believe that there is primarily a human problem in the inner cities. One of the difficulties in the inner cities is that they have been built over, largely by the Labour party, led by Mr. Herbert Morrison, who proudly boasted that he would build the Conservative party out of London. He has done that, but at what expense to the people living in those areas? The right hon. Member for Blaneau Gwent (Mr. Foot) complained about that earlier. There must be a balance between human skills and abilities in those areas. The achievements in London docklands and the start that has been made on Merseyside must be replicated in the inner cities. That will take more money.

We should not increase taxation. The Government should introduce a programme to alter radically our personal income tax system. I hope that they will do that and combine it with the social security system.

We live in an interdependant world in which Britain is a major trading partner. We must ensure that our policies are diverted to expanding world trade and so make sure that Third world countries can stop contracting and improve themselves and therefore trade and buy from us. We can then in turn sell to them and improve our unemployment position and achieve a continued reduction in unemployment. We can therefore begin, through our exports, to solve the very difficult agricultural position facing those Third world countries, many of which find it difficult to feed their people. We must work on the problems of debt and against protectionism. We must work in the GATT, and we must work for an interdependent world, which will benefit our country and the whole of mankind.

12.23 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): It is with a certain amount of trepidation that I rise to address the House so soon after my entry into Parliament. However, I am fortified in my purpose by the knowledge that there is a tradition in this House that one's maiden speech is treated with a degree of courtesy and consideration that is never thereafter afforded to an hon. Member. In saying that, I echo the words and sentiments of my distinguished predecessor the former hon. Member for Brent, South Mr. Laurie Pavitt. As many hon. Members know, Mr. Pavitt entered this House in 1959, and at the time he was described as the first voluntary speaker in the debate after the Gracious Speech. He spoke on the Health Service, a topic to which he was to return on many occasions in this House and in his constituency. It is a cause to which he made a very great contribution.

Mr. Pavitt was noted for his warmth and sincerity and for his depth of knowledge on his specialist subjects. He was also well known for his consideration to his colleagues and, I am bound to say, to his successor. The advice that he gave to a new Member in relation to a maiden speech was also given to and taken up in his book by Mr. Speaker Thomas. It was that one should get it over with. That was the advice that he gave, and it is the advice that I have taken.

When one considers, as one has had to consider over the past day, the Gracious Speech, it is clear that that word has also been passed to the Prime Minister. It is quite clear that it has been suggested to her and to her Government that they should get it over with. When one looks at the contents of the Gracious Speech, one sees why there could not be a more divisive or a more destructive programme. One wonders whence the Prime Minister's advice came. I received friendly advice. The Prime Minister's advice could not have come from her predecessor, her one remaining predecessor in this House, because, if he were to give her any advice, it would certainly not be friendly and the surprise would be if she accepted it anyway. It must have come from some other guardian angel, or perhaps more likely from a malign familiar. Perhaps it came from the Secretary of State for the Environment, the cat that the Prime Minister has set to catch the local authority mouse. Perhaps it came from that quarter.

Quite clearly there is nothing in the Gracious Speech to which we can look to promote consensus. There is everything in it to provoke controversy. Therefore, in my maiden speech I find myself in some difficulty in terms of even attempting to keep to the tradition of avoiding controversy. I am conscious of the fact that this is a foreign affairs day. I crave the indulgence of the House. I shall speak not about the sub-Saharan debt crisis or about South Africa, although they are two problems of real and immediate concern to my constituents and I hope in due course to be allowed to return to them; I shall concentrate instead on domestic issues.

When one listens to the way in which the occupants of the Conservative Benches speak about the inner cities and how they refer to Brent, Haringey, Islington, Leicester and Glasgow, one might well think they were speaking about another country. That is because of the lack of knowledge and shallowness of understanding that they show and, indeed, for all that they care. Those places might just as well be the Balkans. Indeed, when one thinks about it, that is precisely what the Government intend for the inner cities. They intend the Balkanisation of the inner cities of our country. They intend to break them up, divide them and to set one against the other to prevent them being a real power or force for change or progress. They intend to divide and rule. They intend the Balkanisation of the inner cities. The Gracious Speech reveals that to be the prospect for the inner cities in the years ahead.

Nowhere is that more clear or evident than in education and housing. It is clear that what is proposed is the destruction of municipal Socialism, not the development of the municipalities. The Government care nothing for that, but they care everything for the destruction of the gains that have been made by the people of the inner cities since the war.

It is useful to compare the Gracious Speech that my distinguished predecessor, Mr. Laurie Pavitt, addressed in his remarks in 1959 with the Gracious Speech that we heard yesterday. It is an interesting comparison, not least

on the subject of housing because in 1959 it was possible for a Conservative Government to say that new house building would be maintained at a high level and that the slum clearance campaign would continue. That is what a Conservative Government said in 1959. What do they say today? They say:

"Measures will be brought before you to effect a major reform of housing legislation in England and Wales."

The consensus on housing during the past 28 years has been broken and shattered, and one can see why. In the rise of the Conservative party during the past 28 years we have seen the replacement of any hope of consensus and of any real care for the people and problems of the inner cities by the men and women who now swell the ranks of the Conservative party and sit on the Government Benches. We have seen consensus replaced by zealots and place persons who want nothing so much as the destruction of our gains and our party, and who will do anything to achieve that goal. *[Interruption.]* Ministers may well laugh and lounge on the Front Bench now, but they should bear in mind what happened to some of the other zealots and place persons who lounged there before, when the Conservatives sought the destruction of the inner cities and moved against the Greater London council. Those Ministers soon found themselves languishing on the Back Benches. Lounge now and languish later is the message that some Ministers should take with them when they return to their places outside the House.

When one considers the proposals for housing, one sees a pattern and set of proposals that in no way even begin to address the crisis of the time. We need only consider the situation in London. There are 30,000 homeless families, 9,000 in bed-and-breakfast, half a million families on council waiting lists, and one in five live in unsatisfactory accommodation. About £7 billion is needed to repair the existing housing stock. Those are the stark figures for London.

In the borough of Brent, which is seventh on the list of housing deprivation in Greater London, the position grows worse daily. More than 800 families are crammed into bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and there are 1,500 homeless families in all. What do those figures mean? They mean the woman who comes to my constituency surgery with three children and tells me that she has only one room to which to return in a shabby bed-and-breakfast hotel in Earl's Court. There is nowhere for the children to go, nowhere for her to deal with the dirty nappies, and nowhere that she can try to bring up a family. And the Government say that they are concerned about that.

What do the Government's policies mean in terms of alleviating the suffering of the people whom we are sent here to represent? They include the parents who come to my surgery from the Stonebridge estate and tell me that they have five children and live in a three-bedroomed house. The youngest child, who is hyperactive, is obliged to share a bed with two teenage sons—one bed for three boys. The child has no garden in which to play and runs round in the house tearing up the carpets and the lining of the sofas because of his frustration. What am I supposed to tell them, based on this Queen's Speech? What hope can I give them that they will obtain a transfer? There is no hope and no chance, because the Government's proposals hold out nothing but a deterioration in the housing and living conditions of our people.

We need to give our people some hope and some chance, and there is a basis, in housing at least, for some consensus. But the Government have set their faces against that. They have set their hands to a course that is determined to create in our inner cities the development of welfare housing along American lines—sink estates to which people are condemned, with no prospect of getting out. The better estates, with low-rise housing and perhaps gardens, will be privatised—put out to the highest bidder. Then there is no telling what will happen to the rents, and there is no explanation in their proposals of what will happen to homeless families. Where will they go?

There is no telling and no explanation in the Government's proposals about what will happen to housing transfers. How will they be affected? There is no telling and no explanation in their proposals of how they envisage the role of building societies and housing associations. They have told the Government many times, as they have told us, that they need co-operation among local authorities, building societies and housing associations. They do not want one to be set against the other in a spurious competition in which the consumer—the person who seeks housing—is never the winner. The Government should listen to them and to the advice that they must be receiving from those responsible for telling them what damage and harm their proposals will bring. They must find another way and find it soon, because the crisis is growing.

I give an example of another way in which we can try to resolve the two central problems of our inner cities—unemployment and homelessness. In Brent, 2,500 building workers are unemployed and there are 1,500 homeless families. It cost £5,000 to keep each of those families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. It costs £5,000 a year to keep a family in the misery of bed-and-breakfast. The total cost of rent for that accommodation is almost £4 million a year.

With such money and the waste that directly arises from the housing policies that have been carried out in the past by the Government and that will be made worse in the future, we could build 500 new homes a year for five years. We could create 1,300 jobs to absorb some of the unemployment in my borough alone. Imagine what could be done throughout the country if the Government were prepared to put resources into housing. Those resources would generate wealth, employment and opportunity. At the same time, the Government should call upon the willingness, the skills and resources that exist in our country to address the problems of homelessness in a way that recognises, as we on the Labour Benches have shown by our actions, the importance of having a multiplicity of tenures and forms of ownership. Housing associations should be involved. We want their co-operation and flexibility. We want to encourage owner-occupiers and to ensure—as the GLC sought to do before the Government stripped it of its housing powers—the provision of mortgages for first-time buyers.

In the last years of the GLC we produced, as a major housing authority in London, more mortgages and gave a greater chance to first-time buyers than any Conservative GLC administration ever did. However, the Government took away the GLC's housing powers and gave them to the boroughs. The line given then was that those powers best belonged with the boroughs. When the Government were stripping the GLC of its housing powers, the boroughs could do no wrong, but now,

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suddenly, the line has changed. Now the boroughs are not the right authorities after all and there should be no strategic housing provision—it should be left to the market.

We cannot leave this matter to the market because that will not address the concerns of the young couples in my constituency who want to buy their own homes and want low-cost house building to enable them to do so. It will not address the concerns of the people on the Stonebridge or Church End estates. It will not address the concerns of people who are currently trapped in intolerable housing conditions.

The Opposition will oppose the Government tooth and nail on this and other issues that stem from the Gracious Speech. We will seek to mobilise our communities around a great campaign for homes in all our cities. We will seek to mobilise the enthusiasm and commitment that there is in those cities for homes for all. That is the message that will come from the Labour party. It is a message of optimism and of hope that there is an alternative, there is another way. We represent that way.

The Government are closing the shutters on housing in London, in my constituency and in Britain. The Government are doing so for a simple, squalid purpose. It is a party purpose, not a national purpose. The Government will be condemned by communities that will be affected in this way. The Government will be condemned by history. Indeed, the Government can be absolutely sure that, as they seek to close the shutters over the next weeks and months, we will not go quietly into the night.

12.43 pm

Mr. Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I am sure the House listened with great interest as the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) made his maiden speech. I do not believe that it would be inappropriate for me to say at this point that I hope that, as he spends longer in the House, he will come to learn that there is no monopoly of caring on one side of the House or the other. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who is just leaving the Chamber, will bear witness to the fact that he has many friends on both sides of the House. If we come into this House determined to create barriers, these two sword lines will begin to have some meaning again, and that is the last thing that most of us would wish to see happen.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) made a very interesting speech. It was a characteristic speech, in that it was totally lacking in any form of humility. He said that he would give us some reflections on his time in the House, but I wonder whether, instead of ambling across the scene, it would have been better if he had made some attempt to justify his total change in view, which has happened during the past 12 months, over the need for nuclear weapons. I wonder whether at some point he will be able to give us some idea of the part that he played in 1974 in creating the horrifying situation that we now have to face on the island of Cyprus where both the Greek and Turkish Cypriots have suffered for so many years as a result of the inability of the Labour Government of that time to take any decisive action, which they could and should have done as a guarantor power at that time.

We face many world problems—the Gulf, the middle east, southern Africa and East-West relations—but I shall refer only to a relatively small island in the Mediterranean, which has strong links with the United Kingdom and has always been a friend of this country—the island of Malta. Lest we forget, I should like to spend a moment reading the citation when King George VI awarded the George Cross to the island. In April 1942, he said:

"To honour her brave people, I award the George Cross to the island fortress of Malta, to bear witness to a heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history."

That was in April 1942, but the people of Malta suffered until 1943 a consistent bombardment and attack by the Axis powers, with 14,000 tonnes of bombs, 1,468 civilians killed, countless thousands wounded and 24,000 buildings destroyed. It is no exaggeration to say, as any student of history knows, that, without the work and heroic devotion of the Maltese people, it would have been impossible for us to win the battle of Alamein in October that year, and we would not therefore have won the war in the middle east. It is too dreadful to contemplate the consequences of that.

After the war, we repaid the Maltese people by creating a situation in which it might have been possible for Malta to be integrated with this country. Indeed, if the events of 1956 and 1957 had continued, today we would have seen three or four Maltese Members of Parliament sitting in the House. For my part, I believe that it is the greatest tragedy that that did not occur. There is no time today to go into the reasons why there was a breakdown in the negotiations, but I found it very sad.

However, we have to live not with the past but with the present. We know that from 1971 until 1987 the people of Malta had lived under a Socialist Government, with all the usual consequences that follow from that. I shall not dwell on the role of Mr. Dom Mintoff or his successor, whom I found to be a much more reasonable person to deal with, but it is clear that when the nationalist Government came into office on 9 May this year they inherited the usual chaos and mess that Socialists always leave behind them wherever they have been in office. There were massive economic problems.

Sixteen years of Socialism had created that chaos and mess, but, beyond that, it had built into the structure of society in Malta people with a vested interest in Socialism who are still in positions of authority from which they can begin to undermine the authority of a democratically elected Government. We hope that the number of people who will attempt to do that is small, but they do exist. As a result, many major difficulties face the incoming Government. I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is back in her seat and that she holds her present office. I must ask her what we are to do for Malta, and how we, who should be closest to its people, can help them in their hour of need.

I have three "action" areas. First, there should be a total commitment from Her Majesty's Government not only to support the full payment from the EEC as proposed by the European Commission and the Parliament, but to throw our weight immediately behind the request that we know is coming from Malta for full membership of the European Community. Indeed, the Maltese Prime Minister has already made it clear that that is what he is going to press for.

Secondly, will we give every possible encouragement to investment from this country in Malta, and do all that we can to encourage tourism from this country to Malta? It is no understatement to say that Malta depends upon tourism to a very large extent, and 57 per cent. of those who go there on holiday come from this country. Of course, during those years of Socialist Government, the numbers fell dramatically, from about 520,000 in 1980 to 247,000 in 1985. Now Malta has problems in rebuilding its tourist industry. Investment is needed in hotels that need refurbishment and investment. Will we give the necessary encouragement?

Thirdly, we should help in the provision of training facilities. We all know that successive Italian Governments, through the very fact of Italy's proximity to Malta, have been the major donors to and supporters of successive Governments in Malta. It must surely be fact, however, that the people of Malta would naturally look to us for training facilities for their police and armed services. At the present time, when changes may be necessary within the armed services and the police—some of whom have proved slightly unreliable in certain areas during the past few weeks—we should come forward and offer training. Whilst I would never make any apology for the aid and support that we give to Zimbabwe, Mozambique and other African countries in respect of training, we are now considering Malta, which is close to home. If Malta makes such a request, I hope that we shall accede to it.

What other links have we and how can we strengthen them? The new High Commissioner for Malta has not yet been named as far as I know, but he will arrive here shortly. I hope that my right hon. Friend will take an early opportunity to meet him, discuss these matters and extend the hand of friendship in the truest possible way to the people to whom we owe so much.

I return to the point at which I started. It is easy in this world to look around for new friends: they exist, and thank God that they do. However, we must never forget those who stood steadfastly beside us in our time of need. Their time of need is now, and we should help them in every way that we can.

12.54 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Wise Ministers and a wise Government would have listened carefully to the powerful speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), and inwardly digested the message that he was bringing to us.

Twenty-five years ago, when I made my maiden speech, the Government of Harold Macmillan would have listened to such a contribution. Having lost the Conservative deposit in our rolling countryside, Macmillan sacked half his Cabinet on the "night of the long knives"—as Harold Wilson was to say, the wrong half. I am not sure that I can say to my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South that Ministers—from what Peregrine Worsthorne and not somebody on the Left called "bourgeois triumphalism"—will listen to what he has to say, but they would be wise to do so.

In his great speech, for such it was, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) said in his penultimate paragraph—which I commend to the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, the hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) who I am glad, for personal reasons, to see on the Front Bench—that the Foreign Secretary should say more

about the supply of British arms to Afghanistan and about the possibility of the supply of British arms to Nicaragua. I shall devote my speech to just that topic: to the agreement between decision-makers in Britain—we have not been told about the extent to which Ministers were involved—and decision-makers in the United States, who may have been no more senior than Colonel Oliver North and his ilk, to send surface-to-air missiles to the Afghan forces fighting the Russians and to the possibility that British armaments found their way to the Contras in Nicaragua.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) has just entered the Chamber because he wrote to the Foreign Secretary on the question of arms to Afghanistan. I interrupted the Foreign Secretary during his speech. He said that we should be glad about what the Afghan people are doing, but he did not answer the question that was asked about ministerial authority. Although the Foreign Secretary did not answer that question, it is legitimate for the House to ask for an explicit and open policy, not for a covert policy. If our country is sending arms, the House of Commons deserves to be told. Parliament is entitled to an honest explanation of what exactly our country is up to in Afghanistan. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East rightly says that it raises Irangate issues.

The story seems to me to run like this. In the autumn of 1985, Blowpipe missiles made by Shorts of Belfast reached Afghanistan through third parties. That was in response to Afghan forces who were fighting the Russians making a request to the West for anti-aircraft missiles to blunt Soviet air attacks. In 1985, the American CIA was ready to step up its support for the guerrillas. With the knowledge of the Americans in 1985, I believe that an MI6 officer who had established close contact with the Afghan resistance was posted to the British joint intelligence committee staff at the Cabinet Office. That is not just my imagination. It was stated in print on the front page of *The Independent* under the byline of its defence correspondent, Mark Urban, whose work first brought this issue to public attention.

I believe, from more than one source, that MI6, or elements of MI6, wanted to support the Islamic party of Yunis Khalis, a fundamentalist guerrilla group. I believe also that the secret intelligence service wanted to support this fundamentalist guerrilla group and that it had developed relations with one of its field commanders by the name of Abdul Haq. Abdul Haq and his colleagues wanted missiles to destroy aircraft using Kabul airport. In particular, Haq asked for Blowpipe, a shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missile with a range of several miles. The first shipment of about a dozen Blowpipe launchers and about 30 rockets was arranged by the CIA via Saudi Arabia. Such was the success of Blowpipe that the Afghans asked the CIA for about 300 missiles and a smaller number of launchers. That order would work out at a cost of many millions of pounds, yet I am told that only four men at Shorts knew the full scope of the plan. I emphasise that Shorts is a publicly owned enterprise.

The response of the Foreign Secretary to this was that I should understand that most people supported what the Afghan guerrillas were doing. That is as may be and it is open to argument, but I am bound to say to the House that I think that there is another side to this coin. When I was one of my party's delegates to the United Nations I had an interview with Oleg Tryanovsky, who was the Russian

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

ambassador at the United Nations, and I expressed to him the concern of many people in this country with regard to what was happening in Afghanistan.

His reaction was to arrange for me an interview the following day with the lady who was the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kigizi Republic, who explained in detailed and powerful terms, which I believed, that it was only after 14 requests that the Russians went into Afghanistan. She explained that in the first instance there were her people, the Kigizi, 2 million on the Russian side of the border, and 1 million on the Afghan side of the border. That is a split of 4 million and 2 million Turkmen on either side of the frontier and the Uzbek and Kazakhs likewise. There were tribes on both sides of the border and there were persecutions of fellow nationalities in Afghanistan. They—the Russians—were sucked into it against their better judgment just, as a rough parallel, we were sucked into Northern Ireland.

Mr. Wilkinson rose—

Mr. Dalyell: Once troops are put in it is very difficult to take them out.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dalyell: I shall continue my argument and then I shall give way.

I think that this situation is at least open to argument and discussion in the House as to whether it is very clever to do this when we want an agreement with the Russians and when there is a hypersensitive situation. I begin to wonder whether it is in the interests of the people of Afghanistan themselves.

Mr. Wilkinson: Why did the hon. Gentleman not mention that the man who supposedly invited the Soviets in, Hafizullah Amin, was murdered within 24 hours?

Mr. Dalyell: As in Northern Ireland, there are great difficulties and I do not pretend that it is a black and white situation. I am saying that in matters of arms policy the House has a right to know.

I confine myself to certain questions. First, on 11 March 1986, the Prime Minister received Abdul Haq, the guerrilla leader, at 10 Downing street. Did Haq request missiles? If not, why was the Prime Minister seeing a guerrilla leader? If so, what did the Prime Minister reply and why did she not make a statement to the House? I tabled a question, No. 119, on the Order Paper on 25 June.

Secondly, in April 1986, the Foreign Secretary visited Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan. He is quoted as saying: "After more than six years of occupation the time has come for action not words."

What did he mean by that? Did he mean that missiles should be sent? In his speech today he said that he meant action by the Russians. I will accept a correction, but that did not seem to be the sense in which the speech was first made. I have tabled question No. 18 for next Wednesday and I hope that some clarification will be given by the Foreign Office.

Thirdly, were Blowpipe missiles flown from Aldergrove airport, via a British base, to Cyprus? Did the Blowpipes travel from there, either via Egypt or the Gulf states, to Afghanistan? If so, what happens to the policy of end-user certificates? Do we turn the Nelson eye? Is there any way in which end-user certificates can be monitored?

Fourthly, were the Blowpipe missiles—about 30 of them—captured by the Kabul Government in August 1986? Was missile serial No. 186522A displayed in Kabul and was it part of the missile's first production batch? If those questions cannot be answered, I ask: how did British missiles ever get into such a position?

Fifthly, was Shorts asked to supply the missiles and, as Colonel Oliver North said in writing,

"willing to arrange the deal, conduct the training and even send U.K. 'tech. reps' forward if we can close the arrangement?"

Page 465 of the Tower Commission report states:

"In spring 1986, Lt-Col North also was involved in other efforts to help facilitate Contra military purchases through third countries. On March 26, 1986, three months after Mr. McFarlane left Government service, Lt-Col North informed Mr. McFarlane of his efforts (again, with Secord's assistance) to obtain Blowpipe launchers and missiles for the Contras:

[We are trying to find a way to get 10 Blowpipe launchers and 20 missiles from [a South American Country] thru the Short Bros. Rep. . . . Short Bros., the mfr. of the Blowpipe, is willing to arrange the deal, conduct the training and even send U.K. 'tech. reps' fwd if we can close the arrangement. Dick Secord has already paid 10% down on the delivery and we have a [country deleted] EUC [end user certificates] which is acceptable to [that South American country].

On April 4, Mr. McFarlane replied to Lt-Col North, 'I've been thinking about the Blowpipe problem and the Contras. Could you ask the CIA to identify which countries the Brits have sold them to. I ought to have a contract in at least one of them.'

In the same message, Mr. McFarlane also asked: 'How are you coming on the loose ends for the material transfer? Anything I can do? If for any reason you need some mortars or other artillery—which I doubt—please let me know.'

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): May I add to my hon. Friend's list of questions? What were the sales of Blowpipe missiles to the Government of Honduras for certain onward transmission to the Contras?

Mr. Dalyell: I should like to echo that question. I am doubly glad that my hon. Friend has asked it from the Labour Front Bench, because there are deep issues which senior Opposition colleagues recognise and which should be answered either in the Minister's response or at some early stage. In supporting my hon. Friend, I should like to make that my sixth question.

Seventhly, since Shorts is Government-owned, how can the Government persuade us that they did not know about traffic in Blowpipe missiles? That is beyond comprehension. We have a publicly owned firm, yet the Government say, "We knew nothing about it." This raises questions of control. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has been deeply interested in the whole matter of arms sales to central America, a subject in which he has specialised. On 7 May 1987 the Prime Minister said, and I had better quote in context:

"I have made out position on Iran clear. It is exactly the same as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary indicated in October 1984. I have also made it clear that the British Government have not authorised the supply of Blowpipe to the Contras. Our actions have been entirely consistent with our support for a political rather than a military settlement of the problems of central America."—[Official Report, 7 May 1987; Vol. 115, c. 859.]

The wording is odd. I concede that the supply may not literally have been authorised, but did the Government know about arms going to the Contras? That is not made absolutely clear in that answer—or in any subsequent answer that I can trace—whether Ministers knew that British arms were going to the Contras. Therefore, I ask

the direct question: are British arms going to the Contras or are they not and are Ministers sure that they have sufficient knowledge of what the intelligence and security services may be doing in this respect?

My eighth question is: why has an operation of such cost and scope been kept covert and gone unreported to Parliament? This speech is about facts being given to Parliament. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East believes that this should be a matter for the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and perhaps he is right, but somehow or other this information should come into the public domain.

Ninthly, is Mark Urban right in suggesting that a fresh batch is being ordered? I refer to an article which appeared on the front page of a major national newspaper—*The Independent*—on 18 June, headed "Another Blowpipe order set for rebels". Is that true or is it not? There may be explanations and answers to these questions, but it looks as though the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary either knew about Blowpipes going to Afghanistan or they did not. If they did know, why was not the House of Commons told? If they did not have perfect information—or if it was decided that it was better that they should not know—the question arises whether the British intelligence services are formulating foreign policy, as has been suggested by serious people in the press whose remarks have remained unrefuted? If so, as my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East has asked, what is the difference between what is happening here and what is happening in Washington at the moment? If my facts are at all right, what is happening in Britain is no less reprehensible than the goings-on in Iran. The difference between London and Washington is that in our system parliamentary loyalty and governmental secrecy make it much harder to wrinkle out the truth than it is on the other side of the Atlantic.

I know that others wish to speak. I lay my case on two grounds. First, the export of arms is a matter of considerable substance and is central to foreign policy. Secondly, what are we, who have had the privilege of being returned to this House, going to do to ascertain what exactly is being done in our name?

1.13 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): This has been a rich debate, and one of dramatic contrasts. Before the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) leaves, I would like to congratulate him on a particularly eloquent and forceful maiden speech, which will long be remembered by those who heard it. I am sure that he will make important contributions in the House.

No less effective, in a very different way, was the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier). My hon. Friend has had a hard political schooling. He fought Berwick-upon-Tweed and had a tough military training in addition to a business background that equipped him well for his maiden speech. I am only sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), whom I am very glad to see on the Front Bench in his new post as Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, was not present to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury speak on arms procurement. The subject exercises the House a great deal, but not many hon. Members have the expertise of my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury in this matter.

The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) spoke with great sincerity. I am sure that, following as she does in the illustrious footsteps of Dr. Shirley Summerskill on the Opposition side of the House and Mr. Maurice Macmillan, whom Conservative Members remember with great affection, she will play her part in making sure that the concerns of the West Riding and of textile towns such as Halifax are regularly brought to our attention.

At the beginning of the debate we had the swan song—the valedictory—of the great entertainer, the man who is remembered as much for bashing out well-loved tunes on an old honky tonk with a tankard of beer on top as for the role for which he would have us remember him, the role of the wise, elder statesman in the tradition of Haldane and Cardwell—a reforming Secretary of State for Defence who, among his other achievements, impelled me to give up a regular commission in the Royal Air Force and turn to politics. I refer, of course, to the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey).

I wish to address the second and third paragraphs of the most Gracious Speech which deal with our contribution to the North Atlantic Alliance and arms control. In a short period, I shall seek to suggest how, in the light of initiatives on arms control, we should modify our defence policy and try to bring our security arrangements up to date. There seems to be little doubt that an agreement with the USSR on intermediate range nuclear missiles is to be signed on our behalf by the United States. This agreement has moved from being an agreement on longer range INF systems—that is, Pershing 2s and ground-launched cruise missiles on the part of NATO and SS20s on the part of Russia—to one that is more comprehensive, taking into account shorter range systems with a range of 500 to 100 km on both sides of the iron curtain. Of course, we wish the agreement to be global. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend's views on the matter are shared by the other Foreign Ministers and Defence Ministers in the Alliance, and that this agreement was clearly expressed at the NATO Council meeting in Reykjavik. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind the overall importance of maintaining intact the NATO strategy of flexible response. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East sought to pour cold water on flexible response and to indicate that it was no longer valid.

I shall quote from a White Paper on defence which expresses the doctrine clearly, relevantly and well. It states:

"For NATO, the theatre nuclear forces are an important factor, underscoring its credible capability of responding by deliberate escalation under its strategy of deterrence. NATO's INF are closely interlinked with the strategic long-range potential of the United States in terms of concept and structure. The nuclear force balance in Europe is not an isolated quantity and can only be perceived and evaluated under the overall aspect of the global balance of nuclear forces."

An additional observation in the same White Paper states:

"The important point will be to preclude armament trends in the East from causing gaps in NATO's deterrence spectrum which would result in a loss of flexibility and thus jeopardise the combined deterrent power of the Alliance."

Those wise observations are from the last defence White Paper of Helmut Schmidt's SPD Government in 1979 and were produced under the imprimatur of former Defence Minister Hans Apel.

We are now, however, about to go into uncharted waters in seeking to eliminate the cornerstone of flexible response, the centre of our spectrum of nuclear retaliation.

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

There will, of course, still be sea-launched systems and Poseidon submarines available to the Alliance and there will still be manned bombers, but to eliminate ground-launched cruise missiles and Pershing 2s is an action with major ramifications. First, the strategic threat to Europe from the USSR will still remain. Until we achieve the hoped-for 50 per cent. reduction in strategic warheads, that threat will remain undiminished. It is a major threat to our continent which, as a consequence of INF eliminations, will in some sense be less firmly coupled to our NATO allies on the other side of the Atlantic—the United States.

It therefore behoves us more than ever to modernise our own nuclear deterrent forces, as we are doing, with the procurement of the Trident D5 submarine-launched ballistic missile system. But we shall need to do more than that. We shall need to co-ordinate our nuclear strategy more closely with the French, because their force de frappe will have an enhanced value in the era after the zero-zero INF option is put into effect. We shall have to improve our air-launched systems, which must mean introducing effective stand-off weaponry to enable the Tornado force to fulfil, at least to some enhanced degree, the roles previously carried out by ground-launched cruise missiles and Pershing 2 ballistic missiles.

We shall also need to enhance our conventional capability. Reference has been made to this in earlier speeches and it is contained in the Gracious Speech, but one wonders how that objective is to be achieved on current budgetary projections. We have rightly embarked on the Trident programme. We need new helicopters. The H101 is to be bought for the Navy and also for the Royal Air Force. We still have not finished procuring Tornado, especially for the air defence role. We need a new European fighter aircraft. We require advanced personnel carriers and other vital equipment for the Army, especially in Germany. We need to modernise and improve our fleet, especially in relation to anti-submarine warfare.

Many major equipment programmes, all of considerable cost, are reaching the point at which they will impact very severely on our defence budget. Yet we are supposed to do all that and thus, it is to be hoped, increase our conventional defence capability further at a time when British defence expenditure will be declining in real terms. I do not believe that the circle can be squared or that one can get a quart out of a pint pot. We need a fundamental reappraisal of how we are to carry out our roles within the Alliance. We must judge whether we are to maintain intact the Brussels treaty commitment of 55,000 men on the continent of Europe and a tactical air force, whether we shall have to reduce our intervention capability out of area to some extent, whether, as in 1981, our commitment to the east Atlantic and Channel areas will have to be reduced or whether the air defence of the home base is to be diminished. There are hard, stark choices to be faced. Otherwise, there will have to be more salami slicing, and we all know that there comes a point at which the overall capability of our armed forces is seriously degraded by continued slicing of that kind.

I suggest that the main security threat to this country clearly lies outside Europe and outside the NATO theatre. At the moment, it is necessary to deploy three frigates with attendant oilers and replenishment vessels to the Gulf. That particular threat to our lifelines in Europe may grow.

Our American friends may rightly believe that we Europeans, who are more dependent on Gulf oil than they are, should be doing more and that, if we are not prepared to do more, they must begin to reduce their forces committed to Europe.

The strategic position is drastically changing. We must wake up to this fact and take the necessary steps. We should do so in concert with our closest allies—not just the United States, but France and, in particular, the Federal Republic of Germany. Our allies are fed up with British unilateral defence reviews which are presented as fait accompli. Although I accept that we have been told that there is to be no review as such, nevertheless I believe that a reappraisal is necessary.

Our French and German friends are building an ever closer system of military co-operation. This is necessary for the Germans who feel more exposed in the run-up to the zero-zero option implementation on INF. The French, to their credit, are increasing defence expenditure by 12 per cent. this year and by 8 per cent. next year. The French need to do so because they are committed both to the defence of France further forward than before through the force d'action rapide and also to an important out-of-area role as well as to a key role in the strategic, INF and tactical nuclear deterrent areas.

In conclusion, in this period when arms control measures of the greatest significance are likely to be implemented, we must recognise the consequences of those measures for our national and Alliance defences. We should endeavour to seek through such machineries of co-operation as exist—for example, the Eurogroup and the Western European Union—to enhance the effectiveness of the European component of NATO defence. With the current United States budgetary deficit, the weakness of the United States presidency, the extent of United States commitments in central America and the Gulf and perhaps in the future to a greater extent in the western Pacific areas, the Americans will not for ever and aye be able to sustain immutably the current burden of defence in Europe which they bear so importantly on our behalf.

Having said that, I welcome the Gracious Speech and its commitment to Alliance defence, to the United Kingdom strategic deterrent and to our support of the Alliance arms control proposals. In so doing, I associate my congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) on her assumption to high office. It is long overdue and is much to be welcomed.

1.27 pm

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to address the House today. It is a privilege to represent the constituency of Glasgow, Pollok. I have lived in the constituency for 11 years and was one of Pollok's local councillors for 15 years. In both capacities I know well the hard work of my predecessor, Mr. Jim White. He won the seat of Glasgow, Pollok from the Conservatives in 1970, and through his untiring constituency work he transformed the seat from a marginal to one of Labour's strongholds in the city of Glasgow. He is held in high esteem by the people of Pollok, particularly by the ethnic minority, whose cause he so valiantly championed. I am sure that the House will join me in wishing Mr. White well in his retirement.

Pollok faces many of the problems that have today been identified as part of inner city living. They are intertwined and have a domino effect on the lives of the people. I

welcome this opportunity to highlight to the House some of the main problems facing my constituents. Unemployment, bad housing and inadequate social services characterise a constituency that contains no fewer than 12 districts that have been designated as areas for priority treatment.

Industry in Pollok reflects the general trend of unemployment in Glasgow. Existing firms are forced to close or cut the work force, while new firms are not attracted to the constituency.

The recent closure of the large Presto food stores in the Pollok township centre and heavy redundancy imposed at the Coca Cola plant in the Carnwadrie area of Pollok are two examples of Pollok's latest industrial decline, but they have in recent months intensified the fear of the dole that already rages throughout my constituency, where an unacceptably high percentage of the potential work force is unemployed. I hope that the Government's proposals for inner city regeneration will bring real jobs to my constituency. I hope also that any proposed training scheme will be effective and will hold out the promise of real jobs, rather than be the mere manipulation of the unemployment figures that has characterised so many previous schemes.

The despair that high unemployment produces is mirrored in the intolerable housing conditions in Pollok. Recent Government cuts have meant that large areas in my constituency are on the verge of becoming undesirable slums, unfit for human habitation, and a degrading insult to the good people who have to live in them.

My constituency has both private and public sector housing problems. I hope that the Government will review private sector housing grants so that my constituents who live in the Victorian tenements in the Shawlands and Pollokshields divisions of Pollok can carry out the repairs that are vitally needed to bring the houses up to a more tolerable standard. The overwhelming majority of my constituents in the Arden south, Nitshill and Crookston/Cowglen divisions, however, live in the large peripheral council housing schemes that were built in the '50s and '60s as Glasgow's answer to multiple deprivation of the slums. As a result of the recent Government cuts, these schemes are rapidly developing into slums that epitomise the inner city housing problem.

The flat-roofed houses in Craighbank and north Pollok produce dampness and water penetration, which lead to sickness and debility. The multi-storey and deck access blocks in Nitshill, Kennishead and Darnley produce problems of isolation, vandalism and a basic fear of living. They are all heavy testaments to the badly planned housing imposed on my constituents.

My constituents feel rejected and are worried that the proposed community charge will make them feel further alienated and intensify the divisions between rich and poor in Pollok. I look to the new Government to offer positive help and to secure social justice for my constituents. This necessitates the reversal of local government guideline cuts and a massive injection of money into Pollok. This would allow the local authorities to carry out much needed repairs and maintenance and to offer to my constituents the amenities and support services that they so desperately require.

I ask the Government to give local authorities enough money to enable them to enter into full negotiations with local community groups so that the people of Pollok can have a say in the type of new homes to be built in their

areas. In this way, the planning mistakes of past years will not be repeated. Such measures would allow Pollok to become an enriched community, by creating a proper housing mix that would cater for the special needs of such social groups as the elderly and the mentally and physically handicapped.

Any proper inner city regeneration also requires an immediate increase in the social services in constituencies such as Pollok. I hope that the new Government will finance such an increase. I look to them to provide money to train more social workers, to provide more welfare rights workers and to supply greater support services in my constituency, where there is an acute shortage of home helps, home makers and day carers. Such increased social work provision is essential if the harsh effects of unemployment and bad housing are to be alleviated and if the quality of life for the people of Pollok is to be improved.

Above all, the people of Pollok want hope. On 11 June the overwhelming majority of the people there placed their trust in the caring policies of the Labour party. Although a Labour Government were not elected, I look to the new Government to listen to the pleas of my constituents when they ask for a better life. In conclusion, I hope that the Government will revitalise Pollok in the coming years and give my constituents the hope and life to which they are surely entitled.

1.34 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Like other hon. Members, it is my pleasure to congratulate the maiden speeches that we have heard today from the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and from my hon. Friends the Members for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) and for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie). The hon. Member for Canterbury delved into the difficult area of defence procurement. I am sure that we shall hear more speeches from him on defence and foreign affairs during our debates in the next few years. My hon. Friends the Members for Halifax, for Brent, South and for Pollok sadly reminded us — if we needed reminding — of the decline that has taken place since 1979 in industrial Britain and in our public services. That decline has taken place against the enormous benefits that the Government have had from North sea oil revenues. Sadly, that benefit is now beginning to run down and during the next few years there will be fewer resources available to try to rebuild industrial Britain and our public services.

A debate on the Gracious Speech and foreign affairs is bound to cover a wide area. First, I should like to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) who made a characteristically excellent speech, which he told us was his last speech from the Dispatch Box. I should like to pay my tribute to him as someone who worked with him in a junior capacity and who served under him in the Treasury. I have served also as a deputy to him in a number of shadow portfolios in opposition. As the House knows, he is characteristically robust in argument but, over the years, I have found there is no malice to his robustness or to the strength of the way in which he argues.

I pay tribute also to the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) on her promotion to her important post as deputy in the Foreign Office. Several questions have been asked during this debate and perhaps the right hon. Lady will give us a few answers.

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

The Foreign Secretary mentioned the EEC and we should like to know first what will happen about the proposal for a Community-based research programme. As I understand it, meetings will take place this week, possibly as early as Wednesday. The Government should tell the House what they propose to do and, if they propose to continue their veto, they should explain to the House why they intend to do that in an area that is so important for Western Europe, in view of the challenge that we face, especially from the Americans and the Japanese.

There is also the issue of Blowpipe missile sales to Afghanistan. The Foreign Secretary should have given the House better answers than he did. It is no good him standing at the Dispatch Box and implying that those of us who ask such questions condone every aspect of the invasion of Afghanistan. The House deserves to know and should be told. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked several questions about that. I repeat just one of them to the Minister. What sales of Blowpipe missiles took place to Honduras? There have been reports of sales going to Honduras. Perhaps the Government will tell us, because they must know. It is a publicly owned company and there are checks, balances and restrictions, end-user certificates and a vast plethora of controls in respect of sales of arms to areas of the world where fighting is taking place. We should receive some answer to that, if we do not receive answers to all of the questions that have been asked today. We need a better answer than that which we received from the Foreign Secretary. We need such an answer from the right hon. Lady.

I should like to point out, as several hon. Members have already pointed out, that the Prime Minister was quite happy to meet the rebel leader from Afghanistan. However, she has always refused to meet leaders of the majority communities in South Africa. That shows where the Government's morality lies.

I was interested to read in the Gracious Speech that the Government will,

"stand fully by their obligations to the NATO Alliance."

Why was it necessary to say that? We are members of the NATO Alliance and we have signed a treaty. Perhaps the Government have a bad conscience. If they are to stand by their obligations to the Alliance, where will they get the money from? As the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) said, we do not have enough money to fund everything. There is not enough money to pay for Trident and to fund all our NATO commitments. Our defence budget will be cut by about £1 billion during the next three years, which is equivalent to 1p off income tax. Where will our commitment be reduced?

Before the general election, the Government were discussing quietly with Denmark and NATO reducing our commitment to Denmark in time of war. Will Norway be next after Denmark if the Government cannot afford the £1 billion needed to maintain and modernise our commitment? Will it be the British Army of the Rhine? Will it be our 50-warship Navy? The other day we read in the newspapers that the lives of frigates will be extended. There is no point in having a 50-warship Navy if the warships cannot sail much further than the Isle of Wight. Will the Navy be reduced? What about the commitment to radar for the Royal Air Force? We have not yet paid for AWACS, and there are problems with the Tornado

radar. We need another £2 billion to bring the Royal Air Force radar and early warning system up to date. The European fighter aircraft will also be in jeopardy.

Several hon. Members said that, because of the changes in flexible response and the probability of an arms deal, the military committee of NATO had suggested that there should be a 3 per cent. real increase in defence expenditure. That reminds me of the 3 per cent. increase which the Labour Government accepted in 1978 but which this Government have said they will not continue. Has the Secretary of State for Defence agreed to maintain a 3 per cent. real commitment? I do not know who agreed what at that meeting, but we should be told, because the repercussions for the defence budget could be enormous. The declining defence budget could not maintain a 3 per cent. real increase as well as buying Trident and meeting all our other commitments. Perhaps the Minister of State will tell us whether the British Government have agreed to increase our defence expenditure by 3 per cent. in real terms.

The Gracious Speech sets out the Government's strong support for the proposals for the elimination of intermediate-range nuclear missiles and the 50 per cent. reduction in American and Soviet strategic nuclear weapons. We welcome their support for those proposals. It is something of a conversion, but better late than never. It is easy to support a 50 per cent. reduction in someone else's missiles, especially at a time when the Government are vastly increasing Britain's nuclear arsenal by purchasing Trident. But we are happy that the Government have gone at least some way to showing that they believe that arms control agreements are important.

I notice that the Gracious Speech talks about intermediate-range nuclear missiles. I take it — perhaps the Minister can tell us — that that now includes both the longer-range and shorter-range missiles. I notice that the Foreign Secretary nods in agreement. The longer-range missiles are the cruise missiles and Pershing 2 missiles. The shorter-range missiles on the NATO side consist solely of the Pershing 1A missiles in West Germany.

If the Government say that they are supporting the elimination of those shorter-range missiles, are the Government supporting the elimination of Pershing 1A? Are the Government maintaining the position — I understand that it is the NATO position — that the Pershing 1A must remain in West Germany? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East said, it would be quite ridiculous if an agreement were held up because of arguments about this militarily useless weapon, the Pershing 1A, which has a range that could possibly take it as far as Poland, but no further.

What is the Government's position? Do they agree with the United States? Apparently, the United States says that this particular missile must be kept out of the discussions because it is a so-called "third country system." It is not a third country system. The missile may be owned by the West German Government, but certainly the warheads are owned by the United States Government. Indeed, as I understand it, they are under the custody and control of the United States Government. Do the Government support the removal of that missile or do they maintain the line that we understand has been put forward, that that missile is a third country missile and therefore outside the realm of this type of agreement?

From the Order Paper I notice and welcome the fact that a Bill was presented today entitled, the Arms Control and Disarmament (Privileges and Immunities) Bill. From reading the Order Paper I understand that this Bill would cover the obvious questions of verification and observers checking whether missiles have been removed or destroyed. Again we must come back to the point made during the election campaign: are the Government intending to go ahead with "compensatory measures"—I believe that is the phrase—to replace any missiles that leave Britain? Are we to see the removal of cruise missiles from Greenham common only to see them come back in another guise to Holy Loch, Lakenheath or Upper Heyford as sea-launched or air-launched cruise missiles? The Minister should answer this question as it is extremely important. What on earth is the point of sitting down and negotiating a historic agreement to get rid of a whole class of missiles from Europe and then, almost by the back door, bringing exactly the same type of missile, although not based on land, back into Britain?

My right hon. Friend pointed out that if these missiles are removed that will leave battlefield nuclear weapons solely in Germany. I know that there are other nuclear weapons in Europe, but battlefield nuclear weapons will be left in Germany. Frankly, I sympathise with the aide to Chancellor Kohl who pointed out that the shorter the range of the missile, the deader the Germans. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood because I believe that we are in a position where the flexible response is being dismantled. The nuclear part of the flexible response is disappearing. NATO might as well accept that and should start to think about how it wishes to frame its defence policy for the next 30 years.

Mr. Wilkinson: I was suggesting not that the flexible response should remain intact, but that we could be removing the cornerstone from the edifice of the flexible response by eliminating the centre part of the spectrum of deterrents, our INF. We must make sure that the entire edifice does not crumble and fall by enhancing our conventional forces and our other overall deterrents.

Mr. Davies: Obviously, I misunderstood the hon. Gentleman. However, the fact is that the nuclear part of the flexible response is being eroded and dismantled. It is being dismantled because the President of the United States and the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist party have decided that they want to remove those missiles from Europe. That is a political act as much as anything and there must be military consequences.

The only weapons left now are the battlefield weapons in Germany. They make no sense at all to anybody. They make no military sense. They do not make sense to the Germans themselves. Frankly, we must now move rapidly to a triple zero option. Once the cruise and Pershing missiles and the shorter-range missiles go, there will be no case for keeping battlefield nuclear weapons in that part of Germany. If a war broke out in central Europe, and if they were used, they would destroy Germany first. What are Her Majesty's Government's views on that last and possibly most dangerous layer of missiles in Europe? It makes no sense to keep them.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) quoted from the Defence White Paper, and we have heard from the Government time and again about their view on the Soviet Union. It is a superficial attitude.

During and before the election we were told the reason why negotiations were going on about those missiles. The reason was that we were negotiating from strength. Apparently, that is the sole reason why Mr. Gorbachev came to the negotiating table. All the changes taking place in the Soviet Union are totally ignored. Apparently it is all because cruise missiles are on Greenham common that Mr. Gorbachev decided to negotiate. If that is the Government's view—I hope that it is not—it shows that they have understood nothing of the changes taking place in the Soviet Union today and it means that Mr. Gorbachev will capture the initiative time and again. If we do not realistically assess what is happening, we shall be put constantly on the wrong foot by Mr. Gorbachev's proposals. Nobody wants to see that happen.

The changes in the Soviet Union are far deeper and go much further than merely the election of Mr. Gorbachev as General Secretary. Even if somebody else were to replace Mr. Gorbachev, the changes in the Soviet Union would continue, for the simple reason that the Soviet Union is now coming out of what I would describe as a long dark age. We must understand that that was a country that lived through the first world war, the traumas of the revolution and of Stalin's purges, the second world war and then Stalin's parancia afterwards. I am sure that the Foreign Secretary appreciates this. There is now increasingly in the Soviet Union, in the bureaucracy of the Government and of the party, an almost middle-class membership of people who do not remember those traumas, but who are highly educated and look to their European heritage. They are looking back beyond 1917. They are not pretending that Russian history stopped in 1917.

Mr. Jim Spicer: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that exactly the same thing might have been said at the time of Khrushchev? Indeed, it was said by many people in this country. We all hope that the right hon. Gentleman is right, but there is no certainty in this world. Until the day before Khrushchev died, few Soviet-watchers ever gave a thought to the fact that he was not going to go on to do exactly what the right hon. Gentleman has been talking about now.

Mr. Davies: The changes were not as far-reaching under Mr. Khrushchev as they are under Mr. Gorbachev, but they continued. They were not reversed. There was a period of consolidation under Mr. Brezhnev, but the changes continued, and they have been continuing. The movement is in that direction all the time. We make a terrible mistake if we sit back and wait for the hawks to drive Mr. Gorbachev out of the Kremlin. Even if they were to do so, the changes would carry on because they are fundamental changes brought about by time and other circumstances in Europe. The Soviet Union will look far more towards Europe and Germany. Our relationship with the Soviet Union will have to be re-examined as a result.

That brings me to my final point, which concerns the changes with regard to Germany. Changes are now being proposed in the Soviet Union by Mr. Gorbachev. The relationship between the Communist party and the public will have some effect on countries in Eastern Europe and East Germany itself. What is happening now in relation to removing missiles from Germany will have an effect on thinking on both sides of the wall and the divide in

[Mr. Davies]

Germany. We must start to examine that matter and think about what will happen in Europe over the next 30 years instead of looking backwards. During the election campaign, we were told that nuclear weapons had kept the peace over the past 30 years. We were told nothing about the next 30 years. In fact, it is the British Government who are lagging behind. Mr. Gorbachev says that he wants to get rid of nuclear weapons, and President Reagan has said time and time again that they are immoral. The leaders of both super powers are gradually going to move away from reliance on nuclear weapons. The sooner that the British Government and people, and Conservative Members in particular, accept that and start to re-examine their attitudes to the Soviet Union, and the sooner that they understand what is going on in the Soviet Union and what is going to happen in Europe—certainly in central Europe, to Germany—as a result of these changes, the better it will be.

If we reach agreements on intermediate-range missiles, as I think that we shall, and if agreement is eventually reached on a 50 per cent. cut, it will be important not only in itself, but because the super powers will have sat down and negotiated a reduction in the most lethal and dangerous weapons that they possess. If they can do that, they can also improve their relationship in other spheres. Then, perhaps, we shall not see Nicaragua and other countries being used for a battle between the super powers. It will be the best contribution to regional stability and to preventing war from breaking out in different parts of the world. If the super powers trust each other to that extent, they are not likely to try to fight each other in other parts of the world.

I hope that the Government have realised the importance of reaching these agreements, and of what is happening in the Soviet Union, and that they understand that the Americans are also moving away from reliance on nuclear weapons. I also hope that we shall not hear the rhetoric that we have heard from the Prime Minister about how every small country should have nuclear weapons. I hope that we have put that rhetoric behind us, and that we shall try to construct a proper, stable and sensible security policy for Europe for the next 30 or 40 years.

1.56 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I have listened with interest to the contributions of right hon. and hon. Members. Let me begin by thanking the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and many others for the kind remarks that they have made about me.

I should also like to congratulate hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches. We have heard four maiden speeches today, and, while they may not all have been on the subject of foreign affairs, those hon. Members spoke with the customary passion, interest in their constituents and desire to do their best. Whether or not we agree with what they said, we are glad that they have the opportunity to make those speeches on behalf of their constituents. Let me refer particularly to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), who made a thoughtful speech about the very defence issues on which the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has just spoken. He based that thoughtful speech on his industrial

experience of dealing, as a management consultant, with some of the more involved aspects of defence procurement. We shall listen very carefully to what he says in future, as he made some interesting reflections on the scrutiny of defence procurement.

The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) spoke about her own area. I was glad that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Whip was present to listen to her speech, for his constituency is only about 20 miles from hers, and he knows what is happening in the valleys. I also listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie). I am sorry that I missed that of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), but I shall read what he said with great interest.

We heard a characteristically ebullient speech from the right hon. Member for Leeds, East. I am sure that it will not be his last speech on foreign affairs. I must say that I rather agreed with the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) when he said that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East uses every type of weapon. He certainly does. I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman will still be around to make me blush occasionally with his cheery greeting of "Allo, gorgeous" as he comes up the corridor. However wrong he may be about that, as he is about so many other matters, I am sorry that he will not be around for our foreign affairs debates. He raises a laugh wherever he goes, but I am glad that now at last he will have time for his serious music, as well as being that very convincing music hall entertainer that, for light relief, we have grown to love.

The right hon. Gentleman gave us one of his usual happy openings, but that did not prevent us from thinking very carefully about what he had learnt over the many years that he has served his constituents and politics. The debate has ranged from the inner city to many areas of the world. We have concentrated on many defence issues and I shall try to answer a number of the questions that have been asked. However, I hope that right hon. and learned Members will understand if the more detailed points that they have made are left for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence in the defence debate that will undoubtedly take place before long. Some of the questions that I do not have time to answer today may be answered by means of the Order Paper in the coming weeks.

The relationship between East and West is the backdrop to our security and our defence. We welcome the new opportunities for progress in East-West relations. The policies that this country and our allies have consistently pursued are paying off. Mr. Shultz and Mr. Shevardnadze intend to meet in July. It is now possible that President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev will meet again later this year. We should welcome a summit. We hope that it will achieve progress on arms control and also on human rights and regional questions.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli was absolutely right when he said that there are many regional issues that all sides need to address to lessen conflict throughout the world. We may disagree on the means, but we do not disagree on the need to reduce conflict.

Mr. Denzil Davies: If the right hon. Lady is leaving arms control, may I point out that the Gracious Speech says that the Government support the elimination of all these missiles. Does that include the elimination of Pershing 1A?

Mrs. Chalker: The right hon. Gentleman anticipates what I shall say later in my speech. I hope that he will allow me to make progress with it, because I should like to answer as many of his questions as I can.

As well as these steps to achieve real progress in multilateral disarmament, we are looking towards building on our relationship with the Soviet Union. The Government are continuing to try to increase trade with the Soviet Union, cultural exchanges between the two countries and contact at all levels. Because we want to increase that contact, which would bring increased understanding, we very much welcome the progress that is being made on arms control.

Some Opposition Members were rather reserved in what they had to say about arms control. They know that the reason why an INF agreement is in sight is that this Government and our Western allies have taken such a firm stand in recent years in our dealings with the Soviet Union. We have at long last made real progress not only on long-range INF but also on short-range INF. This prize has long been sought, and it is almost impossible to believe that it is nearly within our grasp. The major achievement — Mr. Gorbachev dropping the link with SDI — is a further justification of NATO's position.

In accepting the zero-zero option in Europe Mr. Gorbachev has gone a long way to accepting the position that NATO has adopted since 1981, and so this major achievement of security at lower levels of armaments is almost within our grasp.

Only two weeks ago we had the successful outcome of the Reykjavik meeting on 11 and 12 June. We saw NATO cohesion on INF and on conventional arms control. The Council reiterated the wish for the global elimination of long-range missiles. Of course, there will be detailed problems in the negotiations that will have to be resolved, but that does not mean that we will not achieve it. A rigorous system of verification will be essential, but both sides have agreed that the United Kingdom's deterrent is no part of that INF agreement, and in working towards the zero-zero option I believe that we have achieved a prize for the Western world.

Mr. Wilkinson: Before my right hon. Friend leaves that optimistic catalogue of progress that has been made in the arms control sector, does she believe that if an INF agreement is secured—at least in Europe, and hopefully globally—there will not be an enhanced need for Europe to have at its disposal a strategic defence against ballistic missile attack? The Soviet strategic threat will remain, yet the linkage in deterrent terms with our United States allies will, as a consequence of INF arms controls, be somewhat diminished.

Mrs. Chalker: I think my hon. Friend is right. That must be part of our consideration in working towards the reduction in armaments that we all wish to see.

Mr. Healey: I think that the right hon. Lady has misunderstood the question that she has just been asked, and I see that the face of the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) is wreathed in rather sinister smiles. Does the Minister believe that strategic defence against the remaining Soviet missiles is essential for western Europe if these agreements go through? That is the question that the hon. Gentleman asked. I suspect that he thought he asked a rather different one when she said that she agreed.

Mrs. Chalker: Knowing the skill of the right hon. Gentleman to confuse at the Dispatch Box, I will look carefully at what my hon. Friend said. I hope that in reducing armaments on both sides the strategic defence initiative will not be needed. That is exactly what everybody wishes to see. I will examine exactly what my hon. Friend said when I read the report in *Hansard*.

Great efforts have been made in the last year to achieve the zero-zero option and we have only been able to do that because we knew that we had to respond to the Soviet deployment of the SS20s. We have always said that we would cease that deployment if the Russians withdrew their INF weapons. I get very frightened when I hear some of the speeches of Labour Members because, if we were to do as they wish and simply give up our nuclear weapons and inquire rather gently of Mr. Gorbachev whether he would like to do the same, we would be in dead trouble. Britain knows that and that was the response that they gave to the Labour party in the recent election. We have heard a lot of stuff and nonsense in this debate about how easy it would be to give up our weapons.

While I am dealing with this issue, I will put right some of the other points that right hon. and hon. Members made which were also nonsense. I was quite surprised by the remarks of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent with regard to the non-proliferation treaty. There is no basis for his allegation that our commitment to the non-proliferation treaty is wavering. The United Kingdom is a co-depository power of the non-proliferation treaty. We have taken our responsibilities seriously from the beginning. We played a major role in negotiating the latest major extension of the related nuclear trade regime, the missile technology control exercise. We have no intention of changing that position.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East asked me a number of specific questions. His right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli asked about financing and the commitment that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence gave, in common with other NATO Ministers, on conventional arms spending. The 3 per cent. resource target has existed for a long time, as I am sure the right hon. Member for Llanelli knows from listening to the right hon. Member for Leeds, East. It has always been the aim that there should be a 3 per cent. real increase per annum in defence spending, and that has been confirmed by NATO's defence planning committee and by previous Governments. That guidance makes it clear that we should take account of the share of national resources already devoted to defence and of past and present defence efforts. The right hon. Member for Llanelli knows full well that our record is very good. We commit a higher proportion of GDP to defence than any other major European nation. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor fully supports our NATO commitment, which was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, so the right hon. Gentleman cannot seek to divide us on that point.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East asked about the Franco-German brigade. We have heard that suggestion several times in recent years. We welcome the growing signs that the French are prepared to contribute to forward defence in the central region. We have not seen it happen. It is an idea which has been around for a long time and we shall follow with interest how it develops, but we await some concrete proposal.

A number of other questions have been asked, not only on the big issue of arms control, which we are all

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determined should be successful, but on other issues. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East said that we were preventing our forces from having a flexible response capability. Whatever some military commentators might argue, it is Governments, and it must remain Governments, who decide on the route to achieve multilateral disarmament. While those commentators note the concern about the continuing need for a flexible response, Governments have confirmed, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary did at Reykjavik, that the NATO Alliance will continue to require effective nuclear deterrence based on a mix of systems. When we say, "based on a mix of systems", that is exactly what we mean by flexible response. It is an agreed NATO aim to maintain security at a lower level of armaments. That is what we seek, but it requires us to have a mix of systems.

I am encouraged, as I am sure are hundreds of thousands of people, by the progress to cut warheads to a specific number. But we must always remember that cutting them to a specific number will make verification a much more complicated task than eliminating a class of weapons. I think that everyone looks to the day when elimination of a class of weapons can be achieved. We must ensure in all our striving for multilateral disarmament that the strictest verification rules are established and adhered to, and that is exactly our aim.

We cannot look at nuclear weapons in isolation. The conventional imbalance in Europe, which so favours the Warsaw pact, must not be lost sight of. The prospect of INF agreement this year only reinforces that point. The fact that the Warsaw pact outguns and outmans us in Europe is worrying to all of us. The Warsaw pact has 4 million soldiers; NATO has 3 million. The Warsaw pact has three times as many tanks and artillery and twice as many tactical aircraft as NATO. We should never forget those facts. Agreements on nuclear weapons, vital as they are, cannot disguise them. If we are to achieve our goal of maintaining security at a lower level of forces, the primary focus must be on eliminating capacity for surprise attack and offensive action. To that end, the Government are participating in informal discussions between NATO and the Warsaw pact in Vienna. Those talks are aimed at agreeing a mandate for negotiations on conventional stability. I am glad to say that steady progress is being made, and we look for more. A number of points have been raised about arms exports.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the Minister of State now answer my question? The Gracious Speech refers to the elimination of all the missiles. Does that include the elimination of Pershing 1A missiles in Germany?

Mrs. Chalker: The Gracious Speech refers to the United States proposals, which do not include those missiles. I believe that we are right to go for the solution represented by the zero-zero option and to make steady progress. Once that has been achieved, we can perhaps consider other issues as well.

I am sorry that I could not be in the Chamber to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), but I have had his remarks reported to me. I note that he has already tabled a number of questions about exports of British armaments, which will, of course, be answered in due course. I do not have the Order Paper

with all his questions on it so he will forgive me if I answer in more general terms. I believe that the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber at the beginning of the debate when my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary addressed himself to the question of the Afghan rebels.

Mr. Wilkinson: Freedom fighters.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is right; they are freedom fighters. However, they are rebelling, and rebelling well, against the invading Soviet troops. I am astonished, therefore, that anyone should express dismay that they should be in a position to take effective action in their own defence. I believe that they should do so.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow also referred to the wider question of arms sales to other areas. I assure him that recent allegations concerning the involvement of Her Majesty's Government in supplying arms or training for the Contras are totally unfounded. Our activities are consistent with the policy that we have long supported for a peaceful solution in that area, and we hope that that peaceful solution will be achieved.

Mr. Dalyell: Are we to assume that Short Brothers of Belfast did not undertake any of these dealings? Setting aside the merits or demerits of the Afghan case, are we to assume from what the right hon. Lady has said that Ministers knew about the export of Blowpipe?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary said clearly at the beginning of the debate, we do not—and the right hon. Member for Leeds, East did not in his time as Defence Secretary—enter into detailed discussions of these matters. This is not a matter for this debate, but let me just say further—

Mr. Healey: With respect—

Mrs. Chalker: Not with respect. I am not giving way.

Mr. Healey: Windy.

Mrs. Chalker: I am not windy at all; I am short of time. I want to finish my remarks about arms sales policy—the subject raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Successive Governments have supported the sale of defence equipment wherever it is compatible with the United Kingdom's political, strategic and security interests. In political terms, the supply of equipment to friendly nations has often been backed by military advice, training and support. That underlines our concern for security. We have to strengthen our ability to resist aggression and to help to protect Western interests. That we do in our own defence, and it has always been important for this country.

Arms exports are strictly controlled and export licences are not issued for items that might exacerbate regional or local tensions or contribute to the violation of human rights. We have complied fully with the United Nations arms embargo on South Africa and we shall continue to do so. We are also exceedingly careful in countries with poor human rights records. There are careful controls to prevent the export of equipment that might be used for internal repression. We have rigorous procedures. We keep to those procedures and we intend to continue to do so.

Many hon. Members have posed questions about different parts of the world, and I shall do my best to answer them in the time remaining. My hon. Friend the

Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer) showed especial interest in Malta. He referred to the new Government there. He asked whether we will help Malta. I take this opportunity to welcome Dr. Adami's Nationalist party as the new Government of Malta. I much enjoyed my visit to Malta when I was a Transport Minister. I saw many of the growing problems that the small island had and which, we hope, the new Government will have the courage and the help to put right.

We are looking forward to a further strengthening of the traditional relationship between our two countries. We want greater contact. We shall also welcome the Maltese Government's wish to strengthen ties with the European Community. With my new responsibility for Malta, I hope that I may be able to form a bridge between Malta and the European Community. If there should be an application from Malta to join the Community, it will be considered in the normal way, as for all countries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), together with my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West, mentioned the tragedy of Cyprus. We offered to hold consultations in 1974 after the Turkish intervention and we have done all that we can through the United Nations to ensure that a settlement will be brought about. I understand the concern about the number of Turkish settlers in the north of the island, but I still believe that the problem is best tackled through the initiative of the United Nations Secretary General. We back that initiative all the way. We shall continue to encourage the United Nations and all interested members to follow that path to try to resolve the sad division of Cyprus that has bedevilled the island for so long.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath also went on to talk about the middle east. He spoke particularly about the conflict in the Gulf at present. He referred to the dreadful conflict, and it is dreadful. Many hon. Members consider that the United Nations activity is moving forward perhaps all too slowly. I can tell my hon. Friend that the United Nations Secretary General has been consulting the parties involved and has made his good offices available. The five permanent Security Council members have agreed the text of a draft resolution, and it is now being discussed with other members of the Security Council. That draft resolution covers a cease-fire, withdrawal and an exchange of prisoners. The work is by no means complete yet, but we sincerely hope that the Secretary General of the United Nations, and indeed the Security Council, will be able to bring influence to bear on both sides to cease the terrible fighting that is going on in the Gulf at present.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath went on to talk about the middle east and the need for an international conference. He will know that this week my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary met Mr. Shimon Peres. An international conference on the middle east is very much in everyone's mind at present. We sincerely hope that, when such a conference comes about, there will be representation of the Palestinians as their future will be being discussed. The parties concerned are the ones to agree on the most appropriate formula to bring that about.

We have had a long debate on many issues, but hardly any hon. Member raised the issue of the European Community, except in respect of one main matter—research and development. I apologise to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. He referred to the European

Community, and I shall say a few words about it. I am sad that so little time was spent on the issue. It is important that we should not be abashed about putting Britain's stamp on the European Community. It is our Community and we have a duty to shape it to reflect our interests. That is what we did, and did most successfully, during our six-month presidency in the second half of last year, but we are going on doing it, and we are indeed well placed to do so. Our European partners are already following many of the leads that we have set in Europe. They are seeking to pursue the completion of the internal market as a top priority. Together we are taking common measures to combat terrorism and to push forward an improvement of the present totally unsatisfactory common agricultural policy.

Above all, it is the British Government who have shown the way. We have shown the way to economic regeneration, and other countries in Europe are now following exactly the policies that we have pursued. In this context, I will explain why I believe that it is so very important to get the research and development framework right. I have never hesitated in saying that money should be spent on research and development in the Community, but we must have the right framework. I am not surprised at what has been said, but some of the comments and criticisms are misplaced. We fully support Community research and are strongly behind the development of programmes of real relevance to British industry.

The House may know that only 28 per cent. of current Community research and development spending goes to areas relevant to industry. We did not believe that that was right. We believe that the programme should be far more relevant to the needs of British industry and thus to the expansion of industry which brings expansion in employment. That is why we have pressed for the percentage to be increased. I hope that we are almost ready to ensure that in the proposed new programme not only will the proportion be more than doubled, to 57 per cent., but that improved monitoring will increase the industrial content of the programme.

The Belgian presidency proposal is to spend 5.6 billion ecu—about £3.9 billion—in the next four-year period. That is a very large increase on the present four-year programme of 3.6 billion ecu. In the present financial situation, and with such large sums at stake, it is absolutely right to ensure that every aspect of the programme will meet the needs of industry and provide value for money, and that is exactly what officials are doing now. I hope that all that we have been doing in this respect will be brought to speedy fruition.

Research and development, however, is just one part of increasing collaboration. Because many Community countries have suffered greatly from the recession in recent years, they have watched to see who would be able to create new enterprises and new jobs. They saw that Britain had the key to economic regeneration because we were prepared to put cutting inflation, curbing bureaucratic regulation and allowing enterprise to flourish at the head of our programme. That is why one European Community country after another is adopting that approach and also learning that European industry must compete across Community frontiers, because only if we compete well across internal frontiers can we compete beyond them.

It is in everyone's interests in the wider world that the European Community should continue to be strong. We have a major aid programme to developing countries,

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which can only come from a stronger Community. The important lesson for Governments throughout the Community is to follow the lesson of the Government here. The harsh disciplines of economic reality in Britain do not end at national frontiers. The debate that we had to have to put right what was wrong in this country is now taking place across the Community.

British foreign policy in these past years has developed a signal principle. If a country sticks firmly to its declared policies, be they economic or for the defence of the nation, and if it gives no ground for doubt to its friends or for miscalculation to its adversaries, not only will its influence grow and the respect that it commands in the world be increased immeasurably, but the path that it pursues will be emulated well beyond its borders. In our foreign policy in this country we have taken an unwavering stand against international terrorism, and our European Community partners have followed us in that. We have a resolute position on the defence of this nation and all our partners—in NATO and in the wider world—are following us. Those are just two examples of how the constancy of the policy of this Government can bring dividends. In Europe it has also been gratifying to see that our patient—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed upon Monday next.

Voluntary Services (London)

Motion made, and Question proposed. That this House do now adjourn. —[Mr. Alan Howarth.]

2.30 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): While hon. Members are clearing off, I will congratulate the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on maintaining his position in the Department of the Environment. Not everyone was so successful. He has managed that and will no doubt be appearing on other occasions during the next four years defending the indefensible in the way that he always does. No doubt Opposition Members will approve the comments made by the Minister's hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). The hon. Member for Acton said that all the great difficulties experienced by the Government have been on local government matters. The Government have clearly learnt nothing from the past eight years and are set fair for a rerun of past battles.

Great play was made during the course of the general election campaign about the need for policies to deal with problems in the inner cities. Towards the end of that campaign the Prime Minister specifically referred to such problems on several occasions. Indeed, there was mention in the Gracious Speech about policies for the inner cities.

I do not know why Ministers bother. If they only asked Opposition Members we would be able to tell them—as we have been telling them over the past eight years—all about the problems within the inner cities. I do not need to be a soothsayer to recount the problems. They are unemployment, poor housing, the high crime rate, general levels of poverty, vandalism, inadequate transport and, most of all, no hope. One of the greatest poverties that afflict the inner cities is the poverty of expectation. People have now reached the point where they expect very little or nothing and they are rarely disappointed because little or nothing is what they get from the Government.

The Government have created or exacerbated all the problems of the inner cities that I have just listed through constant attacks on local authorities and especially Labour-controlled local authorities and through the steady removal of central Government financial support through the rate support grant. Through the discriminating policies pursued by the Government since 1979 they have shaped the misery of our inner cities until many are now primed and ready to explode. Even the Government must now realise just how far they have gone. They must realise that they have gone too far and are worried about the increasing threat of social disruption within the inner cities. Having created a crisis they are now trying to gain a level of political credit by attempting to deal with the problem. Having considered the Gracious Speech and having heard the statements made from the Conservative Benches and during the election campaign, I believe that there is only one way in which the problems of the inner cities can be dealt with, and that is through the provision of more resources.

The Prime Minister said that problems cannot be solved by throwing money at them. However, problems cannot be solved by continually taking away money and resources. The Minister must bear that in mind. Resources, resources and more resources are the three things needed for the inner cities.

Central Government have steadily withdrawn support for inner city services and the voluntary sector has done its best to deal with the consequential problems. In London today the position of the voluntary sector is serious, and was made considerably worse by the abolition of the Greater London Council. In its last year of operation the GLC funded about 2,500 groups to the tune of £82 million. As well as providing financial help, it attempted to develop a strategic approach to awarding funds by identifying areas of need both by client group and by geographical area.

The voluntary sector in London as elsewhere was understandably concerned about the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. Indeed, in the face of widespread opposition the Government were forced to make substantial concessions. For example, the Government's contribution through transitional funding was quadrupled from £10 million to £40 million, and the original ceilings envisaged for collective funding of cross-borough or district projects by local authorities were removed. Those concessions were won from a reluctant Government, but they are simply not enough. London's voluntary sector now faces serious problems in maintaining its vital contribution to meeting the needs of Londoners.

There are various pressures on voluntary sector funding, and I shall shoot a few points at the Minister as I normally do. If he cannot reply in his summing-up, I know that he will continue to write to me. I want to ask him about the Government's attitude to urban programme time-expired schemes. We know that the Government have made an agreement about tapering arrangements, but the schemes throw, and will continue to throw, greater burdens on local authorities. There are also the special programme time-expired schemes. There have been a number of specific Government initiatives over recent years, one of which was the under-fives programme, but those projects are now expiring. However, the projects themselves will not just go away. Government support might go away, but the schemes will again look to local authorities to come in with additional funding. There are also the Manpower Services Commission schemes, with continuation and top-up.

Another problem area to which I should like the Minister to direct his thoughts is the European social fund and the way that voluntary sector funding from the ESF fell by over 30 per cent. in 1986. That created more demand on local authorities. A book called "After Abolition" was published by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations in conjunction with the London Voluntary Service Council. If the Minister has not seen it, his civil servants will certainly have seen it. The book came out in January 1987 and made 20 major recommendations. It was the subject of a debate in another place in May. At that time the Minister who summed up, Lord Skelmersdale, said that the Government would respond to the 20 recommendations in that report. Can the Minister tell us by what date the Government will respond to those 20 points?

One of the big areas of trouble in London in terms of the voluntary sector is the Richmond scheme, the London boroughs grant scheme. Last year it took the boroughs three months to agree a budget. This year it is even worse. In late November 20 boroughs agreed a proposal for expenditure of £32 million but ratification by two thirds of the boroughs is required. That means that 22 boroughs

must agree. Despite many meetings, no agreement was reached until the middle of March and that came only after the Secretary of State had said that he was minded to set a limit of £28.5 million.

There was a great deal of uncertainty and a feeling of impending chaos about all this delay. Voluntary groups were faced with the prospect of having to lay off staff and close their doors on 1 April, the start of the new grant year. Even now, two months into the financial year, 150 to 200 groups in London do not know whether their funding will be renewed, and are currently surviving on three-month contingency funds. This is highly unsatisfactory and I am sure that the Minister recognises that. What proposals will he bring forward to make sure that the Richmond scheme operates more efficiently and effectively than it does at the moment? Perhaps a change in the two thirds majority would be of some assistance.

One of the serious problems that the scheme has thrown up is the inability of the scheme to award capital funding because section 48 of the Local Government Act 1985 makes no allowance for the collective funding schemes to have their own capital allocations. Although the committee of the Richmond scheme has pressed the Department of the Environment to provide the scheme with its own capital allocation, it has not met with any success. The bid for capital funding this year is about £12.75 million. During the past 12 months I have repeatedly asked the Minister whether the Government will make such changes to allow capital allocations to be made. Again, I should like the Minister to advise us on any further thoughts that he may have had about that problem.

An associated problem is the premises that are owned by residuary bodies. The London Residuary Body has more than 50 properties that currently house 123 voluntary groups. We know that the London Residuary Body is required to dispose of those properties at the best price that it can and to return the money to the London boroughs. However, many of the voluntary groups that are housed in those buildings pay only peppercorn rents and, given the lack of capital grants in the Richmond scheme to which I have already referred, the prospect of finding replacement premises will make their position wholly untenable.

The Secretary of State has the power to direct the London Residuary Body to do whatever he wants it to do. I put it to the Minister that under the 1985 Act he has the power to say to the London Residuary Body, "Transfer those properties that at the moment house those 123 groups to the boroughs so that the voluntary groups can remain there and continue to follow their projects from those buildings". There are plenty of precedents. The Secretary of State is currently directing the LRB in respect of Thamesmead. Therefore, there is no reason why he could not do so in respect of the 50 properties that I have just mentioned.

Transitional funding was designed to cushion the impact of funding local groups serving one borough and the Minister knows as well as I do that it is available on a taper basis. However, the point is that none of the problems go away. The Government are withdrawing themselves. That is the idea of the taper. Clearly, those groups turn to the borough council and say, "We are losing more Government money. What will you do?" The taper means that the boroughs and the Inner London education authority must find an extra £4 million this year.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Some boroughs are especially hard-hit. Camden needs an extra £406,000, Hackney needs an extra £356,000 and Lambeth needs an extra £347,000. The Government should adopt a more flexible attitude to the tapering of their contributions. If it is not possible to maintain the 75 per cent. contribution across the board, the Government should at least allow extra contributions in those areas that are especially hard-hit. Again, I should like the Minister to advise us of his proposals on that.

We discussed section 137 at great length during the process of the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. Abolition halved London's section 137 allowances. Despite the fact that doubling the limit for the boroughs was the only recommendation for immediate action in the Widdicombe report, the Government have so far refused to use their existing power to raise the limit. I remember that during the long hours in Committee on the 1985 Act Ministers said that if it was shown that the halving of section 137 would have a deleterious effect on the voluntary sector in London the Government would do something about it. However, they have not done anything about it. I should like the Minister to inform us exactly when an announcement is planned. In the debate in another place to which I have already referred, Lord Skelmersdale said that an announcement was pending.

The outlook for the voluntary sector in London is depressing. There is genuine fear that insufficient money will be available to consolidate existing services and that nothing will be available for new developments. There are major gaps in voluntary sector provision. There are, for example, still eight boroughs without the equivalent of an alcohol advisory service. The Government should think about that because I understand that there will be legislation for all-day licensing. No doubt that will mean that alcohol advisory centres will be that much more needed in the London boroughs.

London has a shortfall in its provision of advice centres. It has 14 per cent. below the national minimum. Some boroughs are especially poorly served and 14 have no specialist advice or law centre. Some advice needs are inadequately met. There is a 55 per cent. shortfall in the provision for housing advice. In addition, many agencies need more funds to support their core activities. In the mental health field alone, an estimated 10 per cent. increase in funding is necessary to stabilise current activities.

Central Government and private sources have invested large amounts in capital funding, which cannot be put to community use until staff are employed. That is a nonsense which even the Minister will recognise. It is especially true in housing. A need of £1.8 million has been identified to ensure that about 1,600 bed spaces provided through shared housing, hostel and care in the community schemes can be used. There can be no more crying need for such housing provision than in London. At present, about 7,000 families in London are housed in bed and breakfast accommodation, at enormous cost to the London boroughs. In Newham, homelessness is growing faster than in any other part of London. It is crazy that we cannot provide, through the voluntary sector, the bed spaces which the Government's contribution on the capital side has allowed.

The need for more resources for the voluntary sector is reflected in the demand for new funding from the London

boroughs grants scheme. In this financial year, 206 new applicants applied for funding from the scheme, and the total bid for funding is almost £57 million. But the budget set by the Secretary of State was £28.5 million.

The demand in the voluntary sector is enormous, because the Government are inflicting an ever-increasing burden on the voluntary sector through their continual removal of resources. With regard to the provision of statutory services, they are transferring the burden continually from the statutory to the voluntary sector. Therefore, the voluntary sector in London has a right to say to the Government that, because the Government are exacerbating the problems experienced by the voluntary sector, they should provide the extra funds which we all know are desperately needed.

2.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I thank the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for his kind comments. I always enjoy our encounters across the Chamber. Indeed, during what was almost the last Adjournment debate of the previous Parliament, we debated the position after the abolition of the GLC. I have not checked the *Official Report*, but I recall that the hon. Gentleman was buoyant about the prospect of the Labour party doing well in London. We can now see that the predictions by me and by the Conservative party that the electorate would endorse the Government's policy of abolishing the GLC were more than vindicated in London. What is now called the "London effect" gave the Conservative party a bigger swing in London than in many other areas.

Mr. Tony Banks: I have the safest seat in London.

Mr. Chope: I do not dispute that. That is why the hon. Gentleman can speak more frankly from the side of his party for which he speaks than can some other hon. Members.

I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on featuring in today's *Daily Express*, where he is described as an old hand. I am sure that he will appreciate that description of him in a newspaper that has not always been to his liking. He is certainly an old hand at these Adjournment debates.

The voluntary sector in London is important. The Government take the voluntary sector extremely seriously and have an exemplary record of support and encouragement for that sector, but we do not believe that just because something is in the voluntary sector it is automatically desirable. The list of organisations funded by the GLC which were voluntary by description, but not necessarily by nature, is evidence that many of those organisations should never have been funded, whether they were voluntary or not, and that we should concentrate on the worthwhile side of the voluntary sector and give even more emphasis to the role of the volunteer. Much of the Labour party's policy is directed towards the role of the full-time worker in a voluntary organisation. We must encourage more true volunteers to give their service to local communities, especially in the inner cities.

Perhaps I can remind the House of the answer given on 2 March 1987 by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when she was asked about Government support for the voluntary sector. She said that, in 1985-86, the last year for which data were available, grants and payments to the

voluntary sector by Government Departments amounted to £268 million, which represented an increase of 208 per cent. since 1979. That is an increase in real terms after allowing for inflation and it is quite separate from the payment of £500 million made to voluntary organisations under various employment programmes run by the Manpower Services Commission. This is a record of which the Government can be proud and for which we should be given credit. Indeed, we were given that credit by the electorate in the recent election.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a number of specific points and those with which I do not deal in my remarks I shall, as in the past, do my best to respond to in writing.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the problems associated with the Richmond scheme. This is a scheme whereby the London boroughs grants committee funds bodies whose activities are of benefit to an area larger than one borough. It continues, for the second year, to distribute its not insubstantial budget of £28.5 million. The Trust for London has received its endowment of £10 million, promised during the passage of the abolition Bill, from the sales of the assets of the London Residuary Body. That endowment has been invested and the first distribution of grants from receipts is expected later this year.

With regard to the Trust for London and the London boroughs grants committee, I am the first to acknowledge that, earlier this year, there was uncertainty because the London boroughs grants committee could not fix a budget. Indeed, that uncertainty was great, since a number of staff redundancy notices has been issued. Because of the timely intervention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his proposal to issue and order to limit the budget to £28.5 million for 1987-88, a budget at that figure was agreed extremely quickly. The hon. Gentleman is not correct to say that that budget was imposed by the Secretary of State, as I understand that it was agreed by the London boroughs grants committee. It concentrated that committee's mind and it is a pity that the committee was unable to reach such an agreement earlier in the year, as that would have removed much of the uncertainty. It was that continued uncertainty that caused my right hon. Friend to intervene. He wished to restate the support of the Government for the voluntary sector.

The uncertainty has now been removed and the redundancy notices were not exercised. I understand that the committee continues to fund more than 800 groups. I have seen the list of those groups and I support many of them, but I am bound to say that I would not support them all. The Secretary of State has already made it clear that he is not necessarily happy with the present arrangements under which it may fall to him to intervene in the proceedings of the London boroughs grants committee. For that reason my right hon. Friend invited the committee to suggest alternatives, and that suggestion is not limited to members of the committee. We wait to see what response there is to that invitation.

Within the budget level the boroughs have, through the Richmond scheme, no doubt by careful husbandry, been able to start initiatives. At the same time, very properly, they have exercised their discretion and decided that funding for some bodies should stop. It is inevitable that the funding of each voluntary organisation should be reviewed. That allows scope for new organisations to be developed and for those that have not served a purpose to be excluded from funding in future years.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the position of those voluntary bodies that are currently in premises owned by the London Residuary Body. I believe that there are some 120 occupying about 50 premises. I believe that those voluntary bodies are expressing unnecessary alarm and disquiet. The LRB is discussing with the Trust for London the transfer of those properties to the trust, which is well placed to undertake this task, since the City Parochial Foundation, which manages the trust, has its own property management facilities and staff.

In this short debate it is worth referring to the Department's urban programme. The voluntary sector continues to perform an important role in our urban programme, which is now concentrated on 13 boroughs in London, including the borough which the hon. Gentleman has the privilege to represent. Newham was invited to submit an inner area programme for the first time for 1987-88. That programme contains seven projects from the voluntary sector. That is one half of the total bid and is in line with one of the objectives of the borough to encourage and support the activities of the voluntary sector in the borough.

Mr. Tony Banks: When will we get the money?

Mr. Chope: Nobody has reached a decision on all the individual projects. As I understand it, a decision is still awaited on the projects for which applications have been made. The delay was caused as the result of the general election.

Mr. Banks: The Government called it.

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman was arguing at one stage that there should be fixed-term Parliaments. It was implicit in what he was saying that he wanted a general election pretty quickly. I am prepared to accept that as a result of the general election those decisions have been delayed, but we hope to be able to announce them quite soon.

It is worth drawing attention to the new emphasis that we are putting on the inner area programme, which is to provide funding for voluntary projects which involve an element of enterprise, training and job creation. Already two projects in the London borough of Wandsworth are receiving funds under the urban programme, which I shall describe briefly. The youth enterprise centre is a scheme to provide 22 sheltered low-cost starter workshop units in a disused building in Tooting for young people wishing to start their own business. It will also act as a base for various business support training agencies to provide on-site advice and back-up services. That is funded by the Department of the Environment, Wandsworth and a group of private sector companies, led by Esso.

There is also the Wandsworth training agency, which is a 300-place youth training scheme and a 150-place community programme scheme, funded jointly by the Department of the Environment and the Manpower Services Commission. It runs several training workshops in a wide range of practical skills, including electrical skills and computers. It also runs a placement scheme with local employers in construction, retail, clerical and community care. A wide range of vocational courses are also offered, including City and Guilds and Pitman.

It is to such projects that the Government hope that local authorities and local voluntary agencies will direct their attention during the coming months, because it is by

[Mr. Chope]

providing a start in business and employment for people living in the inner cities that we shall be able to revive the areas that have not yet been revived.

I take issue with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that everything that was bad in the inner cities had been caused by the present Conservative Government. Of course, the reverse is true. The inner city areas that have been controlled for longest by Labour-controlled councils are in the worst despair and are the areas where there is an atmosphere of no hope. It is inner city areas such as Battersea and Wandsworth where there is hope and an expectation that things will get better. Indeed, they are getting better. We have seen from the results of the general election that in the inner city areas controlled by the Conservatives at local government level the policies have received the endorsement of the electorate and that the problems of unemployment are being dealt with effectively.

The hon. Gentleman said that he represents the safest Labour constituency in London. I hope that he will allow

the ideas put forward by the Conservative party to take root in his constituency and will not be deterred from allowing that to happen by the prospect that it may cause more people in his constituency to wish to vote Conservative next time than did on this occasion. [Interruption.] There was a time when the hon. Gentleman could say that it was a 100 per cent. Labour council. In the past few months, that situation has changed.

Mr. Tony Banks: There is the SDP.

Mr. Chope: There has been the first break of that monopoly. As somebody who is very much against monopolies, I welcome that and look forward to the time when the Conservatives will also be represented in Newham.

I shall respond to the points that the hon. Gentleman raised in correspondence, as I have done in the past. I look forward with expectation to answering several further Adjournment debates during the coming months.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 29 June 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

Members Sworn

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by Law:

Sir Ian Stewart Lloyd, Havant.

Robert Antony Hayward, esquire, Kingswood.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We will take points of order after Question Time, in their proper place.

Mr. Stanbrook rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order after Question Time and private notice questions.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

A65 Addingham Bypass

1. Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a further announcement about the proposed A65 Addingham bypass.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I expect to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. Waller: Is my hon. Friend aware that the residents of Addingham will think it entirely apt that the first oral question of this Parliament should relate to a scheme first proposed half a century ago and awaited impatiently ever since? Without wishing to prejudge the inspector's report, may I ask my hon. Friend to take account of the fact that almost all the evidence given to the recent inquiry favoured the Department's preferred route? Will he therefore seek to minimise any remaining delays relating to the statutory procedures before construction commences?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. I am aware that I need to get rid of some of the commitments made by Hore-Belisha before I can start to complete some of my own.

Mr. Page: Is there any similarity between the position on the A65 bypass and that on the A41 bypass, where the delays are allowing heavy traffic to shake the towns of Kings Langley and Berkhamstead and bring misery to my constituents?

Mr. Bottomley: The similarity is that both my hon. Friends and many Opposition Members are keen for necessary roads to be built. We have to go through

democratic procedures and we often learn from consultations. I hope to be able to announce tomorrow that the public will be able to see the latest proposals for the A41. I hope that they will benefit from some of the changes and will support the scheme if they approve of it.

Herald of Free Enterprise

2. Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what basis he made his decision not to bring prosecutions in respect of the Herald of Free Enterprise ferry disaster; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): I am advised that it has been the firm policy of general application over many years not to bring criminal charges in connection with matters which have been the subject of public inquiries of this sort. It was felt that in this case the paramount need was to establish the cause of the disaster as quickly as possible and to see what lessons could be learnt.

Mr. Adley: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply and recognise that he was not in his present position when the decision was made. However, did not the inquiry clearly show that the company had allowed safety to be sacrificed for speed and that negligence was proven? This is a case far more serious than anything similar. My right hon. Friend's Department, through the Civil Aviation Authority, would have grounded any aircraft or airline that had behaved similarly. Has the inquiry any executive powers, and, if not, why has my right hon. Friend apparently pre-empted any decision that his Department might take in future?

Mr. Channon: I agree about the seriousness and importance of the case. The inquiry, which I hope will report before too long, will make what recommendations it likes, and it would not be right for me to comment at this stage on what my hon. Friend says. As I understand it, it has always been the view in all formal investigations that prolonged discussion of the evidence at a public inquiry would prejudice a fair trial if criminal proceedings were to be brought. In addition, witnesses at subsequent inquiries would be inhibited in providing evidence. It is open to the inquiry, if it so wishes, to suspend or cancel the certificates of the officers involved, should the inquiry think that an appropriate course.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that a number of new ferries are coming into operation and that they must be affected by the evidence taken in this inquiry? Is he further aware that unless he is prepared to talk urgently to the transport companies, it is possible that we will face another major accident?

Mr. Channon: I hope that that is not the case. However, the hon. Lady is on to an important point. As soon as I have the recommendations of the inquiry, I shall wish to consider them speedily. A not unrelated question from one of the hon. Lady's hon. Friends should be reached in a few moments.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is it not the case, quite clearly from the evidence that we have seen in the press, that Townsend Thoresen is riddled from top to bottom with negligence and disregard for safety procedures? In that case, does the Minister not regret the blanket decision not to prosecute? Does he accept that it will come ill if one or two officers

are made to carry the can for what was clearly company policy? Will he give an assurance that should it unfortunately become necessary for a similar inquiry to be held in the future there will be no blanket immunity from prosecution?

Mr. Channon: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not expect me to prejudice the inquiry. Let us wait and see what the judge reports, and then the House will consider the appropriate findings. This decision has not been taken in isolation. There has never been a prosecution after a formal investigation of this kind, and this is true not only of these investigations but of inquiries like them, because it is thought that a fair trial would be prejudiced. That was the position when the Labour party was in power. I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says, and it may be right, after the inquiry is over, to look at these procedures again. However, I cannot do that until the inquiry reports.

British Rail (Dundee)

3. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with British Rail management the implications of its Omega plan for the station in Dundee.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): No, Sir.

Mr. Ross: Is the Minister aware that these discussions have taken place against a background of secrecy at different levels of management in ScotRail, and that people have been summoned to meet senior management but no pencils and paper have been allowed into such meetings? Rather than having this type of closed-door consultation, would it not be better to wait until the NUR's independent economic firm of consultants, the National Economic Research Associates, completes its study, and then ensure that ScotRail takes account of its findings, which demonstrate that, with only a 4 per cent. increase in revenue, 10,000 jobs could be created on the railways? Those jobs are required to improve the service given by British Rail.

Mr. Mitchell: It is not unusual for an organisation to stand back and take a good look at its own management and methods, particularly when substantial new investment is coming on stream. ScotRail is doing just that and keeping staff and unions in the picture as it does it. Internal industrial relations matters are entirely for British Rail.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Minister aware that the British Railways Board only two years ago built an amenity/operations block at Dundee at a cost of some £250,000? Is he further aware that it has now been suggested that British Rail may be considering transferring the administrative functions from Dundee to Perth and that, if this were to happen, the block so recently built at Dundee would lie empty, and a replica block would need to be built at Perth? Will the Minister intervene to prevent British Rail from embarking on such a waste of taxpayers' money, and make sure that the administrative functions are retained at Dundee?

Mr. Mitchell: Where ScotRail decides is the most appropriate place to carry out its management functions is a matter for ScotRail and not for Ministers. However, I can say that, as far as the Dundee station staff are

concerned, the plans which are now under discussion will have no effect on the manning of Dundee station. The building to which the hon. Gentleman referred is entirely a management matter.

Drink-Driving Campaigns

4. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to launch any campaign against drink and driving before Christmas.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The objective is to cut out avoidable death, injury and distress. Drinking and driving is unacceptable in today's society.

We are launching tomorrow the next phase in the national campaign against drinking and driving. We warmly welcome the wide support our efforts have attracted. The 1,100 killed and the thousands injured by drinking drivers demand substantial media coverage on a continuing basis.

Mr. Boyes: Will the Minister accept that Labour Members welcome any campaign that keeps off the roads the potential killers—the 100,000 or so drivers who lose their licences each year? As the Government have not agreed to requests for stiffer sentences and the lowering of blood-alcohol levels, will he consider making it a statutory requirement that all pubs, clubs and other places that sell alcohol display clear, bold notices at the exits of their car parks saying clearly what the consequences of drinking and driving are?

Mr. Bottomley: I welcome the all-party support for dealing with this avoidable epidemic of death and injury. Perhaps I can explain why I think it is better during the next three or four weeks not to pay too much attention on potential changes in the law. Drinking drivers will seize any excuse to avoid facing the fact that too many people are drinking and driving. The suggestion of having a notice in car parks near premises where alcohol is served or sold is a good one. I will consider whether, in co-operation with the licensing authorities, we can bring it forward, even if I cannot promise a change in the law to make it mandatory.

Mr. David Howell: When looking at the question of campaigns against motorists and reviewing the law, will my hon. Friend have another look at the campaign being waged against motorists by the London clamping units? Is he aware that when I introduced to the House the clause in the 1982 Transport—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question refers to drink and driving, not clamping.

Mr. Bottomley: If as many people are deterred by the clamp as successful convictions for drinking and driving deter, we may save 30 offenders for every person who is penalised.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Is the Minister satisfied that the Government's proposals for all-day licensing will not make the problem of drink-driving at Christmas worse?

Mr. Bottomley: It is not at Christmas that we have the major problem; it is at this time of the year. That is why we are having another campaign in June-July. It is also worth remembering that it is not a question of how long people have to drink, but whether they mix alcohol and driving at all. I do not think that the question of the

number of hours that licensed premises may be open is relevant. What is needed is social control, self-control and making drinking and driving as unacceptable as smoking in church or chapel.

Mr. Roger King: My hon. Friend will be aware that when there is a drink-driving campaign at Christmas the police are often accused of operating in a heavy-handed way. What talks has he had with the police so that their actions coincide with his present campaign to avoid the sort of hysterical headlines that we get at Christmas during such campaigns?

Mr. Bottomley: I do not think that any politician should be concerned about hysterical headlines. The police have a 365-days a year campaign to deal with drinking and driving. They also have a 365-days a year problem of coping with the consequences of it, because at every accident involving injury the police are involved. There is nothing that they would like to see more than the offences and the injuries cut out, thus allowing them to spend more time on more serious issues once we control our own drinking and driving.

Mr. Stott: The hon. Gentleman is aware that he and I share a common ground on this issue. I was slightly critical of him last year in respect of the budget that he allocated for the campaign on drinking and driving being less than it was in previous years. Can the Minister give us any indication as to whether that budget will be restored to its original figure? En passant, Mr. Speaker, it was not the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) who introduced wheel clamps; it was me, because I moved the amendment.

Mr. Bottomley: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman and my right hon. Friend can sort that out afterwards. I am willing to admire them both. I am grateful for official Opposition support for the campaign. We are spending substantially more on the campaign against drinking and driving, but I am perfectly aware that if I announced tomorrow at the press conference that no taxpayers' money was being spent, we would then get about £40 million free media coverage, and the media would actually carry out their own responsibility of spelling out that this is one epidemic that can be ended if we can raise public awareness and get the enforcement and the education right.

Network SouthEast

5. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether there are any plans for further investment by Her Majesty's Government in the Network SouthEast of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for British Rail to bring forward investment projects.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply, although I am a little disappointed with it. Is he aware of the aging stock in use on suburban services to my constituency of Erith and Crayford and of the growing anger and frustration of regular commuters at the decline in service on those routes?

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to his particular anxieties. On Network SouthEast, British Rail's latest plans envisage spending no less than £969 million in the next five years on new rolling

stock, signalling and electrification. The plans include a new design of electric multiple unit train — the Networker.

Mr. Spearing: Is it not true, however, that British Rail will only bring forward proposals agreed by him on some privately communicated criteria? Does he recall that a few months ago I asked whether he had been approached about the cross-rail project, a long standing British Rail project whereby, for a few miles of standard gauge tube tunnel, the mainline railways could be connected across London? Does he agree that that would bring dividends to London and to the community as a whole? Does he know of any reason why that plan should not be put to him formally?

Mr. Mitchell: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, I do not interfere in the detailed operations of British Rail. If the proposition that he has in mind is so desirable and attractive, he should put it to British Rail, and if British Rail agrees I have no doubt that it will put the proposal to me.

The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong to suggest that I cook up with British Rail what will and what will not be accepted. In this context, I should point out that I turned down the Royston-Cambridge electrification proposal when it was first put up because it was not a viable proposition.

Mr. Steen rose—

Mr. Speaker: I trust that the question is about the south-east, not the south-west.

Mr. Steen: Before any further investment is made in the south-east or anywhere else, will the Minister ensure that British Rail catering cars stock English mineral water, not just the French variety? What does he suppose the chairman of the French railways would say if he were instructed by the French Minister to stock exclusively English, not French, mineral water? Will the Minister speak to the chairman of British Rail about this?

Mr. Mitchell: In these commercial matters it is for British Rail to decide how to satisfy its customers, but, in view of my hon. Friend's vehemently expressed views, I shall draw the matter to the attention of the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Snape: Will the investment proposals for Network SouthEast be subject to the same marketplace mechanism as proposals for other sectors of British Rail? If so, what consolation can he offer passengers on Network SouthEast and elsewhere who have to stand on one another's heads at great expense annually so that he can expound to the House the preposterous nonsense that he and the Department are in no way responsible for the congestion and overcrowding on Network SouthEast and elsewhere on our railway system?

Mr. Mitchell: The quality standards to which the hon. Gentleman draws attention have been accepted by the chairman of British Rail as those that can be reached within the financial targets set for British Rail. The standards that have been set are higher than they are now. Indeed, Network SouthEast has set particularly high quality standards for itself. For example, last year, in terms of punctuality, the standard was 91 per cent. of trains within 5 minutes. This year the figure is up to 93 per cent. I look forward to those standards rising even higher throughout the whole of Network SouthEast on average.

Mr. Gregory: Does my hon. Friend agree that greater resources would be available to Network SouthEast if it were to press ahead with the privatisation of Travellers Fare and with British Transport Advertising Ltd.? Will he discuss the matter with the chairman of British Rail at an early opportunity?

Mr. Mitchell: The matter of British Transport Advertising Ltd. is already proceeding. British Rail has been asked to ensure that the private sector is involved, wherever possible, in catering services.

British Rail (Electrification)

6. **Dr. Moonie** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail about the electrification of the east coast mainline north of Edinburgh.

Mr. David Mitchell: None, Sir.

Dr. Moonie: What assurance can the Minister give for the future development of rail services north of Edinburgh?

Mr. Mitchell: Rail services north of Edinburgh, among other places including Aberdeen, are currently served by the superb HST125 services which now operate on the east coast main line, with a number of them going well north of Edinburgh. As to the form of traction on those routes in future, it is a matter for British Rail to bring forward proposals such as it thinks fit. It is not for Ministers to interfere or to initiate. British Rail proposes, Ministers dispose.

Mr. Adley: Nevertheless, following the point made by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), does my hon. Friend agree that the Government would be doing nothing less than their national duty if they assisted British Rail to recognise that commercial criteria are not the only criteria by which new electrification schemes should be judged?

Mr. Mitchell: Electrification schemes should be judged on whether they provide the quality of service required most economically. That is a matter for management, not for me.

Mr. Madden: Because of widespread concern about electrification north of Edinburgh, and indeed between Bradford and Leeds—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us confine it to north of Edinburgh.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister, when he gets back to his office, telephone the chairman of British Rail and ask him when he is to meet deputations who want to discuss electrification schemes, especially as, over the past two years, the Minister has urged all and sundry in Bradford to ask for such meetings? It would greatly help if the Minister would put some pressure on other Ministers to agree to the meetings that he himself is proposing.

Mr. Mitchell: There are other senior staff in British Rail besides the chairman who have responsibilities in this respect. I think I am right in recalling that one such meeting has already been held.

Mr. Madden indicated dissent.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is shaking his head. If I am not correct, perhaps he will write to me with further details.

The electrification of the east coast main line as far as Leeds is a year ahead of schedule. I expect it to commence services in October 1988. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in congratulating British Rail on that achievement.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Minister agree that his dictum that British Rail proposes and he disposes is not the whole of the story? Is it not true that he also encourages and discourages? In that event, will he encourage British Rail at least to do a feasibility study of electrification north of Edinburgh?

Mr. Mitchell: The House and the hon. Gentleman well know that I have encouraged British Rail to bring forward viable investment propositions. Indeed, I have a track record of approving them, and approving them in a quick and businesslike way, which would be the envy of any of his predecessors in Labour Governments.

The electrification approvals that were given between 1974 and 1979 amounted to £71 million; and between 1979 and 1987 they amounted to £474 million. When the hon. Gentleman can emulate our record, I am sure that he will be very pleased with himself.

M25 (Compensation Claims)

7. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many compensation claims arising from the construction of the M25 have been settled; and how many are outstanding.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We know of 3,274 settled cases and 5,018 outstanding cases.

Mr. Smith: Is the main reason for the delays in settling the outstanding cases difficulty in reaching agreement on the amount of compensation to be paid? If so, is my hon. Friend satisfied that the district valuer is treating all these cases with the appropriate urgency? Will he reconsider the case of my constituent, Mr. Denis Langford of Seven Hills road, Iver Heath, to see whether his case can be dealt with rather more quickly?

Mr. Bottomley: I shall write to my hon. Friend with a full reply to the points that he has made. The district valuer deserves thanks from both parties in disputed cases, because it is a good way of settling a large number of cases, especially when they arise over the construction of a major motorway, such as the M25. If improvements can be made in the procedures, we will search for them and try to bring them into effect.

Mr. Higgins: How many compensation claims are being pursued against the construction companies, given the fact that widespread repairs are already necessary on the M25?

Mr. Bottomley: Some of the repairs would normally have been carried out within the first year of the motorway being opened. On one part of the M25, we agreed to a delay because we thought that that would be of general benefit. If I can give a fuller answer to my right hon. Friend, I shall write to him.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie: Will the regulations on compensation be enforced sympathetically, or narrowly and restrictively according to the book?

Mr. Bottomley: One reason why I regretted my hon. Friend's departure to the Back Benches was that I

suspected that he would ask such questions. The answer is that we are bound by the law, but I hope that within the law we can treat people as they would wish to be treated.

Ferries (Safety)

8. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to take any action to improve safety precautions on roll-on/roll-off ferries.

Mr. Channon: My predecessor ordered a formal investigation into the capsizing of the *Herald of Free Enterprise*. The hearings have now been concluded. I hope to receive the report within about a month and when I have it I will give the most urgent consideration to its recommendations.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge the inherent conflict between the pursuit of profit and the achievement of safety standards in all forms of transport? As it is his personal duty to apply safety standards in transport, why did he say in reply to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) that he intends to take no effective action against a company which exposed its passengers and crew to such terrible and avoidable peril?

Mr. Channon: I have already answered a question about the latter point. I do not accept everything that the hon. Gentleman has said. As to his first point, I believe that these enterprises should be profitable and safe. If they are not safe, I shall take the necessary action—[HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] The House would expect me to wait until I receive the recommendations of the inquiry, which I hope will be out in about a month.

Mr. Gale: Those of us who represent constituents who were on the *Herald of Free Enterprise*—and I think that there is not an hon. Member in east Kent who does not find himself in that position—will welcome any new safety measures that enhance the safety not only of passengers but of those who work on ships. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the results of the inquiry will not lead to a vendetta against all RO-RO ferries? Does he recognise that many ferry companies, including the Sally Line of Ramsgate, already observe watertight bulkheads and have a 100 per cent. safety record?

Mr. Channon: I note what my hon. Friend has said. I want to get the report, publish it as soon as possible, allow everyone to think about it and take speedy action where it is required.

Mr. Leadbitter: Does the Minister accept that there are two outstanding elements in this unfortunate disaster that he should take into account? First, to what extent will the Secretary of State for Transport accept responsibility? Secondly, since even partial flooding is likely to be critical in such ferries, is not their design a matter of deep concern? What work is his Department doing in that regard?

Mr. Channon: If the Department bears some responsibility, we shall have to accept our share of it. I do not wish to prejudge the results of the inquiry. Flooding and design may be covered by the recommendations from the inquiry. If they are, we shall consider them urgently. There is much to be said for research into those issues as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Stott: My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) asked the Secretary of

State what action he intends to take to improve safety on such vessels. I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that he has power under regulation 408 of the Merchant Shipping Regulations 1984. It is clear that the *Herald of Free Enterprise* was operating contrary to those obligations. The company failed to maintain a safe place of work or a safe system of work, and the ship's log did not give an accurate description of the draught of the vessel before leaving Zeebrugge. All those things were contrary to the regulations, and the Secretary of State has the power to deal with shipping companies which flout the regulations. Is it not time that his Department set an example for safety at sea and safety for passengers?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but he has not made any specific suggestions. I should have thought that what I am doing is entirely reasonable and that the whole House would recognise it as such. An inquiry is going on and it will report in a month. We shall then decide to take urgent action if that is required. What could be more reasonable than that, and what more could any other Secretary of State do?

Channel Tunnel

9. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on arrangements for financing the Channel tunnel project.

Mr. David Mitchell: The financing of the Channel tunnel project is a matter for Eurotunnel.

Mr. Taylor: There have been repeated assurances that no public funds or guarantees will be given for this outdated white elephant. Will my hon. Friend say something about the circumstances in which the European Investment Bank has been persuaded to provide a cheap loan of £1,000 million, when the rules of the EIB clearly state that any loan, no matter how small, must be guaranteed by a Government or a body of equivalent status? Finally, will he comment on the circumstances in which British Rail was persuaded to tear up its previous agreement and to agree to provide hundreds of millions of pounds of advance payments to the tunnel to make it slightly more viable?

Mr. Mitchell: The loan of £1 billion from the European Investment Bank is not public money and repayment will not be guaranteed by the Government. Security is being provided by the clearing banks that are participating in the project.

On my hon. Friend's second point about advance payments by British Rail, I understand that British Rail has not agreed to any advance payments to Eurotunnel. The proposal that has now been agreed is for regular minimum payments each year once the tunnel is open for use.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Minister not agree that the European Investment Bank is guaranteed by the member states of the Common Market and that the £1 billion, which will be poured into that ill-starred venture, will represent, at least in part, some public expenditure? Would it not be better to put that public expenditure into electrifying the whole of British railways in a progressive plan, including the Leeds-Bradford section, instead of the project being continually sabotaged by the Minister and his Department?

Mr. Mitchell: No public expenditure is involved. The European Investment Bank obtains its operating resources mainly by borrowing in its own name and on its own credit in domestic and international markets. In this case there is no guarantee at all from the Government. This is entirely a commercial loan.

Mr. Aitken: Will the Government insist that Eurotunnel sticks to its original guidelines for national investment quotas in the equity of this project? Surely even Channel evangelists such as my hon. Friend might have second thoughts if the British institutions invested as little as 10 or 20 per cent. in the project, thereby allowing it to become the famous Franco-Arabian-Japanese Channel tunnel?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is, as usual, on his hobby horse on this matter. Eurotunnel has recently agreed a loan facility of £72.5 million to provide interim finance until its public share issue later in the year. That does not involve any Franco-Japanese or middle east finance.

Aircraft (Near Misses)

10. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss recent near collisions by aircraft using Heathrow; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I hope soon to meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority. The CAA has responsibility for the safe operation of aircraft in the United Kingdom, including the provision of air navigation services. Recent statistics published by the CAA show that, although traffic is increasing, the likelihood of a public transport aircraft being involved in a risk-bearing airmiss continues to decline.

Mr. Strang: Is the Secretary of State aware that recent press reports, including statements attributed to air traffic controllers, have aroused widespread concern about the possibility of a disaster at Heathrow? I recognise the importance of the CAA, but does the Minister accept that in the last analysis the Government are responsible? Is he satisfied that sufficient resources are being made available for this purpose, in terms of both staff and the most modern and high technology equipment?

Mr. Channon: I hope that there is not widespread concern. Hon. Members may have heard Mr. Tugendhat, the chairman of the CAA, state clearly on the radio today that the likelihood of a risk-bearing airmiss is going down, not up. That is encouraging when one considers the growth in traffic. The CAA is responsible for safety and I am satisfied that it has sufficient resources for this purpose. If it does not, I am sure that it will tell me so.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the airlines operate at the forefront of aviation technology and lead the world in safety in the equipment that they use? Is he satisfied that the BAA is operating under the umbrella of the CAA and the national air traffic services with the best equipment that is available today? If not, why not?

Mr. Channon: I agree with a great deal of what my hon. Friend has said. A massive amount of public money has been spent on equipment, and a large sum will be spent in future. If the CAA comes to me with proposals on safety grounds, I shall look at them with great sympathy. So far I do not think that there is any need for the CAA to do so.

Heathrow Airport

11. **Mr. Bernie Grant** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning BWIA's application to increase flights to Heathrow airport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Trinidad and Tobago Government recently sought additional traffic rights for BWIA between the east Caribbean and London. It was supported by St. Lucia and Barbados. I am pleased that the matter has been resolved.

Mr. Grant: Is the Minister aware of the concern in my constituency—[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Grant:—at the fact that the BWIA cannot have more routes from Heathrow airport? Is he further aware that British Airways has four times the number of routes of any Caribbean carrier? Does he not consider that this is unfair, especially on the basis of the Government's policy of free and fair competition? Will the Minister meet a delegation to discuss this matter further?

Mr. Bottomley: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his question. It is as reasonable for him to ask that question as for any other hon. Member to pursue air traffic agreements for constituency or other reasons. I am not sure that I am the right person to meet a delegation. The discussions that took place, the agreement that was reached and the resolution of the matter raised were a tribute to people getting together and trying to sort out problems. Some air traffic agreements are not simple, and I am sure that this one will benefit from the hon. Gentleman's interest.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Peter Wright

48. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the proceedings in the Wright case in Australia.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The hearing of the Government's appeal against the judgment delivered in the Supreme Court of New South Wales is due to commence on 27 July.

Mr. Winnick: Having lost the court case in Australia, why is more public money being wasted in pursuing this matter further in the courts? Would it not be useful if the Attorney-General started his new post with a clean sheet and recognised that the Wright case has become a farce? Is he aware that another book which the Government tried to ban, "One Girl's War", and which technically is banned in the United Kingdom, is now freely available in the Library and I have a copy of it in my hand?

The Attorney-General: I thought that it was well enough understood by now that the Government were upholding, or seeking to uphold, in the courts of New South Wales the principle that those who have served in the security services of this country owe a lifelong duty to the Crown to preserve the confidentiality of any material that came to their knowledge by reason of that employment, unless authorised to publish it. That is the principle that I shall seek to uphold in the Court of Appeal. I certainly do not intend to embark on my tenure of this office by surrendering after one adverse hearing.

Mr. Ashby: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that all right-minded people support him in his endeavours and his desire to ensure that former members of the security forces are not allowed to publish their memoirs? Will he also consider the longer term, that is that section 2 should not be abolished, but should be replaced by a freedom of information Act which would ensure what the permissible boundaries are in respect of all these publications?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the first part of his question. I did not notice that this was much of an issue during the general election, and if it was, it did not seem to advantage the Labour party to any discernible extent. On the second part of his question, my hon. Friend will recall that the Government introduced a Bill in another place along the lines that he suggested, but that it did not find favour. Further policy on that matter is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Where is the consistency in the Government's position? Why is it that they pursue Wright in the Australian courts, yet they leave Mr. Nigel West, now a Tory Member of Parliament for Torbay (Mr. Allason), free? The Government do not pursue him in the courts, but he wrote two books which set out, in detail, the internal workings and structure of both M15 and M16. Are there two laws in this country? The Government pursue one man but leave the other, when both have committed the same alleged crime.

The Attorney-General: In spite of the numerous questions that the hon. Gentleman has asked and the answers that he has received, I am afraid that he still has not understood that the principle that the Government are seeking to uphold is that anybody who has held employment in the security services owes a life-long duty of confidentiality to the Crown.

Mr. Benyon: May I re-emphasise to my right hon. and learned Friend that for many of us on the Conservative Benches the only thing that matters is that a trusted public servant has abused his position of trust. We firmly support what the Government are doing.

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I shall not comment upon anything that is in issue in the proceedings before the court in New South Wales, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support for the principle that the Government are seeking to uphold.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I welcome the right hon. and learned Gentleman to his new office, if not to entirely new responsibilities, and wish him well.

On the assumption that Wright's main allegations have already appeared in the British press, and noting that the whole book is advertised for import from the United States, is not the attempt to hush it up now a waste of money and effort? Would not that money and effort be better expended in investigating what are, after all, extremely serious allegations, made by somebody who is in a position to know?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to the hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I believe that expression has already been given by others in the House today to the importance of the principle that the Government are seeking to

uphold. It is a matter to which the Government attach considerable importance and I believe that the public support them.

Family Courts

50. **Mr. Baldrey** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the future of family courts.

53. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on his consultation document on the establishment of family courts.

The Attorney-General: The Government published a consultation paper in May 1986 setting out three possible options for reform in the handling of family cases. That paper indicated that Ministers intended to be in a position to take decisions about this matter not later than December 1987. That remains the target, but the matter is a complex one and the Government cannot commit themselves precisely to that date or to any particular decision.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that if, at the end of the day, for reasons of cost it was decided not to proceed with family courts, that decision would be met with widespread disappointment by those who are involved in trying to make sure that the system of family law in this country works as efficiently, effectively and humanely as possible? In those circumstances, would my right hon. and hon. Friend at least undertake to look at jurisdiction in the various levels of courts—magistrates, county courts and so on—to see how that jurisdiction might be simplified to make it more streamlined for the benefit of all involved in applying family law in this country?

The Attorney-General: I recognise my hon. Friend's long-standing interest in this important subject. Officials are still considering the resource implications of the various options upon which decisions can be made. I do not think that I should speculate upon the outcome of their considerations when it ultimately comes before my right hon. Friends to decide the matter. Plainly, the issue to which my hon. Friend has referred will be one to which importance will be attached.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Piecemeal reforms may be all very well, but our court systems were arranged at a time when attitudes to children, divorce and maintenance were quite different from those of today. Before taking any final decisions, will my right hon. and learned Friend look again at the entirely innocent victims of the present arrangements, the 160,000 dependent children who are annually involved in divorce cases? There is overwhelming evidence to suggest that a coherent family court structure would best serve their needs.

The Attorney-General: I know my hon. Friend's interest and experience in these matters. The interests of children will, of course, be in the forefront of my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor's mind. That is a matter—

Mr. Skinner: Let us get to question No. 54.

The Attorney-General: My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has a good deal more interest in this matter than has the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr.

Skinner), who is shouting from a sedentary position. I note what my hon. Friend has said, and I shall draw it to the attention of my noble Friend.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Attorney-General not agree that in any restructuring of the court structure, which is long overdue, some effort should be made to ensure that the courts are adequately staffed and have adequate resources? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman not also agree that the example that we now see in Crown courts and county courts, where lists cannot be met simply because of the shortage of court staff, does not give us much hope of confidence in the future of the court structure if he or his party is in charge?

The Attorney-General: Without commenting on general assertions, of course I acknowledge the importance of adequate staffing.

Mr. Anderson: The precedent of the Crown Prosecution Service does not augur well for adequate staffing. Will the Attorney-General bear in mind that from the time of the Finer report there has been an increasing consensus among all those involved, both legal practitioners and those on the welfare side, that there must come about a unified, coherent court structure?

The Attorney-General: I note the strong expression of opinion voiced by the hon. Gentleman today. As I said, all these matters are being considered, and my right hon. Friends will take a decision as soon as possible.

Zircon Satellite

51. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the progress of inquiries resulting from the search of BBC premises in Glasgow in February in relation to "Project Zircon".

The Attorney-General: The police investigation which started in January is continuing, and the matter is being considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Dalyell: February, March, April, May, and now June—is it right that the police investigation involving the Special Branch on that Sunday morning should go on for so long? Is not the truth of the matter that this has little to do with the national security of our country and everything to do with pressurising the BBC?

The Attorney-General: No, Sir.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Mozambique

55. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the level of emergency support being provided by Her Majesty's Government to assist with the present crisis in Mozambique.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): We have committed nearly £14 million in emergency aid for Mozambique so far this year, including a pledge of up to 30,000 tonnes of cereals. In addition, our share of emergency and food-aid provided by the European Community this year amounts to nearly £3 million.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Minister aware that the consequences for Mozambique of war and drought are

defence expenditure of 42 per cent. of the annual budget and, among other things, the highest rate of infant mortality in the world? What steps are the Government taking to end South African destabilisation in this region? As we now know that the Government's commitment to overseas aid has been reduced to the disgraceful figure of 0.32 per cent. of gross national product, will the Minister assure the House that that essential aid for Mozambique will not be taken from another part of the overseas aid programme; in other words, the poor will not be asked to feed the poor?

Mr. Patten: In response to the last part of that rather long question, our major contribution to Mozambique comes out of the growing aid programme, for which I am pleased to be still responsible. On the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, we endorse the Nkomati accord and, with other European Community Governments, have consistently pressed the South African Government to stand by it.

Mr. Wells: I congratulate my hon. Friend on providing emergency support for the starving people in Mozambique, on which I am sure the whole House will congratulate him, but can he assure the House and the country that, in the chaos in Mozambique, the assistance will reach the right quarters and feed starving women and children?

Mr. Patten: I very much hope so. My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. The most recent aid package that we announced of £2 million will largely go towards precisely the priority that he has identified. Part of it will go towards improving facilities at Maputo port and part will go to the Save the Children Fund to help to improve its food distribution organisation in Zambezia, which is the province probably most affected in the current emergency.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) the Minister told the House of the Government's attitude towards South Africa, but the reality is that South Africa continues to be the major determinant of the crisis in Mozambique and continues to fund the terrorists fighting in that country. What practical steps will the Government now take to put realistic pressure on South Africa to stop this funding of terrorism?

Mr. Patten: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would know about the help that we are giving to Mozambique in the training facilities at Nyanga.

Mr. Fairbairn: Given the fact that, prospectively, Mozambique is the most prosperous country in southern Africa, that it has a minute population compared to this country and is seven times the size of France, given that it has a fence erected by the Marxist Government to prevent its people from getting out, and that they choose to go, not to any of the five African countries to the north, but to South Africa, can my hon. Friend explain why we should be concerned about helping the victims of a Marxist Government?

Mr. Patten: The economic policies now being pursued by Mozambique, after its agreement with the IMF and the World Bank, certainly do not seem terribly Marxist to much of the outside world. The reason why we are giving so much emergency relief to Mozambique is that there is such a sizeable and unattractive emergency there.

Developing Countries (Debt Repayment)

56. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards the imposition of debt repayment ceilings by developing countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: The unilateral imposition by debtors of repayment ceilings risks damage to their long-term creditworthiness and can hinder their development. I would prefer to see the genuine problems of the poorest and most indebted countries settled by joint action on the part of creditors.

Proposals made by the Government for easing the debt burden of certain sub-Saharan African countries received broad support at the Venice summit.

Mr. Alton: Notwithstanding the Minister's reply, is he aware that in Peru, which had the fastest economic growth in Latin America in 1986, there was an 8 per cent. growth rate because it linked its repayment of loans to 10 per cent. of all export earnings? Is that not an approach that the Minister would welcome and commend to other impoverished countries? Does he not accept that many Third world countries are in great poverty because they are now paying back more in loan repayments than they are receiving in aid?

Mr. Patten: The first part of the hon. Gentleman's question showed that he had thought up his supplementary question before listening to my answer. I am delighted that the debt of the poorest countries in the world was put firmly on the political agenda by the Venice summit, and I am pleased that the summit called for a solution to those problems by the end of the year.

Mr. Stanbrook: What is the advantage of a loan, as opposed to a grant, to a developing country? After all, a loan only imposes further burdens on the developing country to repay the money, which is precisely what the original money was intended to assist it with.

Mr. Patten: There is a great deal of wisdom in my hon. Friend's question. That is one reason why we have a record on retrospective terms adjustment that is pretty well second to none.

Mr. Holland: I congratulate the Minister on his re-appointment and commiserate with him over the constraints that he will find on funding for his portfolio. Surely the reality is that, in relation to sub-Saharan Africa, the Venice summit delivered nothing at all. It is imperative to write down and write off a major share of the debt of the sub-Saharan African countries, especially at a time when the most recent OECD report shows that the total resource flow to those countries has fallen by nearly a half since 1981.

The Minister says that he will do something about debt, but what is he doing on aid? We are discussing grants, the issue raised by the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook). The British overseas aid programme has now fallen to 0.32 per cent. of gross national product, despite

the assurances given by the Minister to Tory candidates only last month that the real value of the aid programme would be preserved.

Mr. Patten: First, I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's kind words. Secondly, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be pleased with the hon. Gentleman's endorsement of his sub-Saharan African debt initiative. Thirdly, our aid programme has increased in real terms since 1983.

Bilateral Aid

57. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what amount of bilateral aid is being made available to each Central American country in the current year.

Mr. Chris Patten: British bilateral aid to the five Central American republics, Belize and Panama during 1986 totalled £16.4 million, which includes £11.6 million Commonwealth Development Corporation finance. I shall publish details of our aid to individual countries in the *Official Report*. Figures for the current year are not yet available, but they are likely to be similar.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that since 1979 the Government's record of aid to Central America has been one of continually decreasing aid to Nicaragua, and increasing aid to neighbouring countries such as El Salvador and Honduras? Does he not think that it is time that British aid to Nicaragua was increased in line with the development of that country and the improvements in the living standards of its people? Will he take this opportunity to condemn American-organised and inspired terrorist violence against the Government of Nicaragua, which leads to the death of so many innocent people in that country?

Mr. Patten: I am interested in, but not surprised by, the Left-wing fixation with Nicaragua, often to the exclusion of much poorer countries. We are constantly being pressed by Opposition Members to ensure that more of our aid programme goes to the poorest countries in the world. As I have had to tell the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) from time to time, there are 50 countries that are poorer than Nicaragua.

Mr. Key: Does my hon. Friend agree that, rather than sloganising politically about the virtues of the Government of Nicaragua, those who are genuinely interested in solving the plight of the people there would do much better to invite the Government to do all that they can to encourage the Central American states to come to some agreement about coffee prices, because they are at the heart of Nicaragua's exchange problem?

Mr. Patten: I bow to my hon. Friend's knowledge of coffee.

The following is the information:

The breakdown between countries is:

	Capital aid	Technical cooperation	Disaster relief	Commonwealth Development Corporation
	£	£	£	£
Belize	2,274,000	865,000	—	40,000
Costa Rica	—	522,000	—	11,016,000
El Salvador	—	47,000	193,000	—
Guatemala	—	—	10,000	—
Honduras	271,000	487,000	—	500,000
Nicaragua	—	3,000	83,000	—
Panama	—	70,000	—	—
	2,545,000	1,994,000	286,000	11,556,000

Bilateral Aid

58. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to make a response to the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Commons, HC 32, 1986-87, concerning "Bilateral Aid: Country Programmes."

Mr. Chris Patten: I expect to present the Government's detailed observations on the report to the House after the summer recess.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister recall that paragraph 141 of this report says that the last Government White Paper on aid policy appeared about 12 years ago? Does he not agree that the majority of British taxpayers would be

quite happy with overseas aid, provided it followed the lines of the White Paper produced by Dame Judith Hart in 1975, entitled "More Help for the Poorest"? Is he aware that the evidence produced to the Select Committee shows that that is not now the policy being pursued? Will he now revert to those policies, which the House and the nation endorsed in 1975?

Mr. Patten: Quite a few things have happened since 1975. The Labour party has lost three general elections since then. I am not convinced that the electorate is as familiar with Dame Judith Hart's White Paper as is the hon. Gentleman. I can assure him that we shall deal with whether to publish a White Paper in our response to the extremely interesting report from the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Children in Care

3.32 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough) (*by private notice*): asked the Minister for Health if he would make a statement on the recent increase in the number of cases of alleged child abuse in the Cleveland health authority area.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): Investigations into the way in which these cases are being dealt with have been put in hand by the Northern regional health authority. In addition, the regional health authority today announced that it is making arrangements for all cases of suspected child sexual abuse in the south Tees district to be discussed with other consultants drawn from a special regional reference group that is being established.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has asked for an urgent report on the findings of the regional health authority. It is extremely important that if there appears to be a case of child abuse it should be carefully and sensitively investigated. If the current investigations confirm suggestions that there have been significant failings in achieving this in Cleveland, the Government will be ready to institute an inquiry.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should say to the House that some of these matters are sub judice and that questions and answers should not refer to individual cases that are before the courts.

Mr. Bell: I welcome the Minister's response to my question and also thank him for moves today by the regional area health authority. Does he accept that the Opposition are as anxious and determined as anyone to protect children from the infamies of child abuse? Is he aware that an area review committee consisting of representatives of the area health authority, social services, the police, the NSPCC and other services drew up draft guidelines for the handling of alleged child abuse in Cleveland? Is he further aware that if these guidelines, drawn up in March, had been adopted there would not now be a question mark over the future of 204 children taken into care in Cleveland since May?

Is the Minister further aware that Dr. Marietta Higgs, a consultant paediatrician in health care on Teesside, and Mrs. Sue Richardson, of Cleveland social services, colluded and conspired to keep the police out of the allegations of sexual abuse whereby Dr. Higgs made the diagnosis, a social worker made out a place of safety order and a justice of the peace signed it without the intervention of the police, other agencies or any counselling procedures or corroboration?

Is the Minister aware that on 11 March, 11 June, 18 June and 23 June specific requests were made for the intervention of a police surgeon in cases of alleged sexual abuse, but all the requests were turned down by Dr. Marietta Higgs and the social services, thus impeding justice for the children and their families? Is he also aware that on 28 May, at a meeting with police officers who expressed their disquiet at the number of alleged sexual abuses not examined or corroborated by a police surgeon, Mrs. Sue Richardson implied that she did not see a place for a police surgeon at any stage in the proceedings and to this day the social services department is still holding out against such police involvement and has submitted its own draft guidelines which exclude the role of the police?

Finally—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has already asked a very long question.

Mr. Newton: I want to make three points in response to the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). First, I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he has pursued this matter and for taking the trouble to see me for a full hour this morning to put me completely in the picture about his point of view in light of the investigations that he has carried out.

Secondly, I confirm that so far there has been a failure to adopt guidelines about the kind of co-operation that we believe is essential among health authorities, the social services departments, the police, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and others in handling these matters. However, I am happy to say that a further draft has been produced today, and I hope that that will lead to further progress.

Thirdly, the hon. Gentleman will not expect me to comment off the cuff on the serious suggestions that he has made about two individuals. However, we will give very careful consideration to his points when considering whether an inquiry is needed and, if it is, what form it should take.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaugh): The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and I represent a number of parents involved in this issue. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough has had my backing—although I did not comment publicly until the weekend—in calling for action to stop the two doctors at the centre of this matter until there has been a cooling-off period. Although I welcome the suggested guidelines, does my hon. Friend the Minister accept that it would be in everyone's interest—in the interests of innocent parents, of innocent children and of parents who are afraid to take their children to hospitals in south Teesside in case they find themselves in a position similar to that which exists—if the two doctors involved were suspended? Could my hon. Friend bring pressure to bear on the regional health authority to allow the volatile atmosphere on Teesside to cool off? There are other paediatricians in this world. Please use them.

Mr. Newton: I also want to pay tribute to the proper concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaugh (Mr. Holt) in these cases on behalf of his constituents. My judgment at the moment is that the regional health authority has taken the appropriate action by setting up the panel to which I have referred. However, I note my hon. Friend's comments and I will draw them to the attention of the regional health authority.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Notwithstanding the individual issue which might cause an inquiry to be established, does not the general question of child care proceedings identify the need for an inquiry into the way in which the system of checks and balances clearly has not been operating in many parts of the country? Does the Minister agree that far too often the watchdog is too closely identified with the burglar and that there is a need to re-examine the way in which the family courts operate and for a more independent objective element in the way in which we treat such cases?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be aware that we are well down the track of producing further

[Mr. Newton]

and more formal guidance about the way in which we should deal with matters of this sort. My present view is that had the guidance, which was issued by the Department some time ago, been followed in the light of what has been happening in Cleveland, many of these difficulties would have been avoided. I should prefer for the moment to avoid the further delay of an enormous wide-ranging inquiry and instead to get on and produce the guidance.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that children in my constituency, which is covered by the South Tees health district, are being collected from their beds at 2 o'clock in the morning by social workers? Does not my hon. Friend see a clear parallel with the activities of another body which carried the initials SS? We may all applaud the wonderful job that the social services do, but what reassurance can he give that the practice to which I have referred will be stopped?

Mr. Newton: A wide variety of allegations have been made and we shall be considering them all. I would not wish to comment on specific instances this afternoon, but I undertake to take account of what my hon. Friend has said, as I shall take account of the remarks of others.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Is the Minister aware that the problems of child abuse seem to be growing? In the south Leeds part of my constituency there have been instances of child abuse that have led to court cases. Apart from what has happened on Teesside, as important as it is and notwithstanding that it has been properly raised in the media over the weekend, should there not be an appropriate investigation into guidelines, the way in which social services operate, legal considerations and police involvement? The issue has been worrying many of us for some time and suddenly it has come to the surface. Should we not consider the problem overall, bearing in mind that there is something wrong if the statistics are not telling us an untruth?

Mr. Newton: In producing the new guidance we shall, of course, take account of what is said to have happened in Cleveland. Proposals have been made for some changes in the law, and in taking account of those proposals we shall be considering what is alleged to have happened in Cleveland.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chiselhurst): Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the difficulties that is confusing public discussion is the absence of any objective assessment of the extent of child abuse, other than the register which covers less than 10 per cent. of the population? Does he think that recent events emphasise the need for his Department to be undertaking a careful and objective assessment of the extent of the problem or for an expert body such as the NSPCC to be funded to enable it to do so?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend takes a close interest in these matters through his connections with the NSPCC and he will be aware that we are intending to begin to collect statistics centrally in a way that I hope will shed further light on exactly the problem about which he is concerned.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): As a former assistant director of social services, I am deeply shocked by some of the remarks which have been made in

the Chamber this afternoon. It might be helpful to the Minister and the House if the hon. Gentleman understood the magnitude and severity of the abuse of some children in Cleveland. For example, a young girl under five years of age is suffering from gonorrhoea.

Mr. Newton: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me when I say that everyone in the House would agree to the proposition that none of us wishes to condone or see the continuation of child sexual abuse. I am sure that that is not the purpose of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) or of anyone else who has spoken from either side of the House. The issue is how we are to strike the right balance between differing considerations, and the query that has been raised is whether that is being done. It is essential that that issue should be inquired into and that it is established as something that commands the respect and support of us all.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Does my right hon. Friend accept that this issue has arisen as a result of professional advice given by two consultants employed by the National Health Service? As he has rightly decided to seek a second opinion, will he ensure that the cases of children who are still in care are examined no later than by lunchtime tomorrow?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can give precisely that undertaking, but when the present panel has completed its work on 20 of the cases we shall urgently consider how to proceed with the remaining 200 cases.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the Minister confirm that the evidence of the research is that at least 10 per cent. of children in Britain are sexually abused? Two thirds of them are girls and one third are boys. An overwhelming number of cases involve the children's fathers, although stepfathers and neighbours are sometimes involved. Does the Minister agree that the problem has been massively neglected for years and that the social and health services are now trying to deal with the problem, which has caused enormous harm to the generation of children who have been neglected. Does he not agree that rows like this simply put us back? If there is a need to review individual cases, let them be reviewed, but let us not have cheap publicity in the press and in this place. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that a massive amount of child sexual abuse continues to be neglected and will he confirm that he intends to take steps to ensure that it is not?

Mr. Newton: I recognise, as does the whole House, that there is a widespread view that the problem has been underestimated over the years. There is now some argument about how far the incidence of child sexual abuse has increased and how far there has simply been an increase in the reporting of previously unrecognised child sexual abuse. Either way, we all have to tackle the problem, but it will be tackled effectively only if there is public confidence, which appears to be lacking in Cleveland at the moment, that it is done sensitively and carefully.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): On a day when yet another public inquiry into the way in which social services departments carry out their business is in progress, will my hon. Friend assure us that during the inquiry he will remember that society leaves many of the most difficult,

painful and confusing cases to be dealt with by social workers? When from time to time they make a mistake, we all rush to condemn them and turn them into a scapegoat. That is an unhelpful way of dealing with the matter and it is sure to destroy the social workers' confidence.

Mr. Newton: I am very conscious of that, and I agree with the thrust of my hon. Friend's remarks.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Does the Minister agree that, while the safety of children must have the highest priority, their interests are not secured by procedures that are faulty or not properly carried out? Investigations of wrongful allegations of child abuse would be extremely damaging not just to the parents but to the children involved. The Minister said that we were well down the track in producing final guidelines for social services departments and that changes in the law had been proposed. As everyone in the House recognises the difficult role of social services departments and, indeed, of medical consultants who are called in to advise, will the Minister tell us when he expects the final guidelines to be issued and proposals for changes in the law to be brought before the House?

Mr. Newton: Obviously we shall want to consider both those points further in the light of what has happened. I aim to issue the guidance within the next few months, taking account of the events in Cleveland and of any further information that we gain about them. Draft guidance exists on these matters. It has clearly not been fully reflected in the events in Cleveland and I am concerned that it should be.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must move on.

Points of Order

3.49 pm

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recollect that for centuries we have indulged in prayers before starting our proceedings in the House. Those prayers have always been respected by all hon. Members in all parts of the House. In view of what happened today, may I suggest that new hon. Members should have those traditions drawn to their attention, that they should be told that notes on speeches should not be written during prayers, and that when hon. Members are indulging in prayers they turn about to face the wall? Unless we maintain those traditions—and I say this with the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker—the House will degenerate.

While I am on the subject, I wonder whether it would be a good idea to suggest to new hon. Members that it is normal to wear a jacket in the House.

Mr. Speaker: I am aware that one hon. Member, a new Member, who may not know the traditions of the House, behaved in that way. Let me repeat, especially for new Members, that the whole House knows that we face the wall while at prayer. As to dress, now that the Chamber is air conditioned, hon. Members who come in to make contributions should wear a jacket, otherwise, like me, they may get a cold.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What about the Prime Minister?

Hon. Members: What about lady Members?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us not nit-pick. I mean male Members. Lady Members will, of course, wear dresses.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker, and in the same spirit, would you also remind hon. Members, especially new Members for their guidance, of the tradition of bowing to the Mace when entering and leaving the Chamber, and of any other events or traditions that you believe to be of value in adding to the dignity of the House?

Mr. Speaker: These are early days in this Parliament, and these matters are best left to the Whips on both sides of the House.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, concerning today's private notice question. You may recall that in 1983 I introduced legislation on child abuse which perhaps would have prevented what has happened in Cleveland. I was a little surprised that I was not—

Mr. Speaker: Order. With the best will in the world, I cannot call everyone. I know of the hon. Member's interest, but I have to balance both sides of the House and I—

Mr. Hayes *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. With the best will in the world, I cannot help the hon. Gentleman. These matters may be raised in the course of a debate, and if we can get on today the hon. Gentleman may be fortunate enough to be called.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: I will take Mr. Skinner.

Mr. Skinner: Where are we going?

[Mr. Skinner]

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that at the start of the last Parliament, after the 1983 election, you had strong representations from the alliance representatives about the allocation of time and, more to the point because it concerns your province, when and how speakers would be called from the Social Democratic and Liberal parties. You will recall that at that time I made the point that I was not altogether happy about the massive increase in the allocation of time to their representatives.

Here we are and it is a completely new ball game. I want to know, before the ink is dry, what your response will be now that it is pretty clear that they have blown a fuse. For instance, would it be better from all points of view if, instead of having the leader of the Liberal party ask questions of the Prime Minister on a Tuesday, and the leader of the SDP asking questions on a Thursday, you combined the two? Then, on the first opportunity, tomorrow, you would afford the leader of the Liberal party a question and the leader of the SDP would follow. They would then find it possible to ask questions of one another.

During the election and before, the leader of the SDP was always on television. Normally one would have expected him to be at Wimbledon, but he has not been there. It is incumbent on you, Mr. Speaker, to assist, and to try to get to the bottom of this row between these two Kilkenny cats.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not one of my functions to get to the bottom of rows between different parties. I cannot help the hon. Gentleman, but, as ever, I am grateful for his advice.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Further to the point of order relating to prayers, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that the reason why hon. Members turn round halfway through prayers is that they used to pull faces at each other. If that is truly the origin of this tradition, should it not be re-examined with a view to modernising prayers as well as some of our other institutions?

Mr. Speaker: I think that the majority of Members feel that we should stick to our traditions.

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[THIRD DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [25 June]

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—[Mr. Churchill.]

Question again proposed.

Social and Economic Situation

Mr. Speaker: No fewer than 34 right hon. and hon. Members have applied to speak in the debate. A large number of them are new Members. I will do my best to accommodate as many as possible, but this will depend upon the brevity of the speeches. I have no authority to limit speeches to 10 minutes, but it would be extremely helpful and courteous to new Members if that could happen today.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you selected for debate the amendment standing in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) and five other Members who represent the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru? Will there be an opportunity to vote on the amendment tonight or at a later stage during the debate on the Queen's Speech?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that amendments are not called until the final two days of the Queen's Speech debate. The matter does not arise today.
3.56 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I am very pleased that at this early opportunity in the new Parliament we will have a full debate today on subjects to which Her Majesty's Opposition wish to draw attention. The fact that within the countries of the United Kingdom and the various regions of England there are various differences is not something that should be a matter of regret, because it is part of the history of our country that these are differences that can be tolerated within the state that is the United Kingdom. The fact that Scotland, incorporated voluntarily within the United Kingdom for over 250 years, has maintained its own national identity during that period is evidence of the basic diversity with which the United Kingdom can be properly associated.

I am aware that the Opposition, in choosing the topic, wish to draw attention to the economic differences that exist and the extent to which they think those differences have been aggravated over the past eight years. However, I think they will appreciate that economic differences within the United Kingdom are not a new phenomenon; they go back to the industrial revolution and the fact that

certain parts of England, the west of Scotland and south Wales were at the forefront of the industrial revolution when that social and economic transformation took place. The whole history of the past 60 years has involved the consequences of that industrial revolution and the need to assist the transition that the United Kingdom as a whole has been going through over that period.

Since the 1930s every British Government, including the present Administration, have recognised the need to assist those parts of the country going through that period of economic transition by a regional policy that played, and continues to play, an important and significant part in assisting the economies of substantial parts of England, Scotland and Wales.

The major feature to which Her Majesty's Opposition wish to draw attention is the differential levels of unemployment within the various parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for giving way at this early stage. During the course of his remarks will he be bringing out other differentials between Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom—for example, the higher expenditure per capita on the Health Service in Scotland; the great benefits which have flowed to Scotland under the Government in various methods of regional aid; and the desire that we all have that not only Scotland but other regions of the country should continue to benefit in the next four or five years from the sort of policies that the Government have pursued throughout the United Kingdom?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend has simply repeated what I have already emphasised. Under successive Governments various parts of England, Scotland and Wales have received, and continue to receive, special recognition of their distinctive needs, as I believe is right and proper.

The Opposition wish to draw attention to the differential levels of unemployment, but those differentials have existed for many years, and the Labour party and Labour Governments have been conspicuously unsuccessful in resolving them. To date, no Labour Government have left office without leaving more unemployment than when they came to office. *[Interruption.]* The Opposition may not like that, but it is true. If we are concerned about the very high levels of unemployment that we are presently experiencing, it is fair to point out that the process of mounting unemployment did not suddenly begin in 1979. It began in 1974, leading to a doubling of unemployment under the Labour Government and a subsequent further doubling under the present Administration. In the past year, however, we have begun to see the reverse of that process for the first time in a good many years. I believe that the whole House will welcome that.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. Perhaps he will allow me to continue.

We are experiencing an almost unique combination of falling inflation, falling interest rates, a healthy currency and substantially falling unemployment throughout the United Kingdom. As the House is well aware, in Scotland in the past 16 weeks alone unemployment has fallen by

more than 34,000. After the interruption caused by the decline in North sea oil prices in 1986, Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom are enjoying a common experience of substantially falling unemployment. I hope that the House as a whole will be only too pleased to welcome that.

The role of the Government has been not merely to provide the economic framework in terms of inflation, competitiveness and industrial relations leading to those falls in unemployment. In the past few years we have also given specific help to those parts of the United Kingdom which have had particular problems. I refer, for example, to the Government's creation of the Locate in Scotland bureau in 1981. In the past six years that body has succeeded in creating or maintaining up to 42,000 jobs in Scotland through a successful policy of inward investment. We have also seen the transformation of the Scottish Development Agency into what is now recognised, as it was not eight years ago, as the most successful agency of its kind anywhere in western Europe.

The Opposition constantly claim that the Government have neglected the interests of, for example, the west of Scotland. Yet Members representing Glasgow constituencies speak with pride of the transformation of Glasgow in the past 10 years. They rightly believe that Glasgow is miles better than it was and represents the best example of urban renovation that the United Kingdom has seen. Where do they think the resources came from which enabled that transformation to take place? *[Interruption.]* I am happy to pay tribute to Glasgow district council and Strathclyde regional council for their contribution, but they cannot claim to be starved of resources when, with capital allocations from central Government, they have achieved the transformation to which I have referred. Much of the transformation has also come about through the work of the housing associations, which have received enormous support from the Government, and through the work of the Scottish Development Agency in the Glasgow eastern area renewal.

The Government decided that the next garden festival should be held in Glasgow, declared Glasgow to be the European city of culture and assisted with other provisions of that kind. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), an honest, fair-minded man, well knows that the transformation of the city that he helps to represent would not have been possible if the Opposition's criticisms had an iota of truth in them.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I am grateful for the right hon. and learned Gentleman's tribute to my local authority colleagues in Glasgow. He has paraded as one of his achievements the declaration that Glasgow was to be the European city of culture, but what funds were provided for that enterprise by central Government?

Mr. Rifkind: That designation was in recognition of the cultural improvements that have taken place. Scottish Opera is funded by the Government.

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Rifkind: The creation of the gallery housing the Burrell collection was also assisted by the Government.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross) *rose*—

Hon. Members: A Scottish Tory!

Mr. Fairbairn: Opposition Members may cheer, but not for long.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend appreciate that the Locate in Scotland bureau carried out a survey in the whole of north America on where in Europe, not in Britain, incoming investment wished to go, and that 80 per cent. favoured Scotland provided that there was no change in this country's economic policies and no tax-raising assembly in Edinburgh?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. and learned Friend is substantially correct in referring to that favourable perception of Scotland and of the United Kingdom economy.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rifkind: No. I have a number of remarks to make and many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. If I give way to everyone who seeks to intervene, that will not be possible. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that.

Dr. Godman *rose*—

Mr. Rifkind: In seeking to suggest a divide in the economic opportunities for Scotland and for other parts of England and Wales, the Opposition always concentrate solely on unemployment. I do not deny that that is a major consideration, but I have already commented on the reality behind the charge. If the Opposition believe that there are fundamental problems facing the Scottish economy, before reaching a firm conclusion they should consider the advances and advantages in economic development that Scotland has experienced. Perhaps they will explain, for example, how, between 1979 and 1986, Scotland experienced an increase in manufacturing productivity of 4.9 per cent. compared with only 3.6 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole. They may also like to explain how Scottish manufacturing exports outperformed the United Kingdom by 30 per cent. and why the latest figures for gross domestic product per head and disposable income per head are higher for Scotland than for any part of England outside the south-east of England and East Anglia. They may also like to explain why male average weekly earnings in Scotland, which are at the rate of £201, are higher than in any other part of the United Kingdom, except the south-east of England.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rifkind: No, I shall not give way.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to hon. Gentlemen who rise on points of order that they only take time from the debate. It would be far better to let the Secretary of State get on with his speech and thereby enable more Back Benchers to be called.

Mr. Rifkind: If, therefore, there is said to be a division between Scotland and the south, hon. Gentlemen opposite who represent Scottish constituencies should recognise that our economy is a complex organism and that, within it, Scotland has some major advantages of the kind to which I have drawn attention. Opposition Members should avoid the naive, simplistic definitions which obviously attract an uncultured and unsubtle approach to such matters. That advice is appropriate.

Attention has also been drawn to the traditional industries in Scotland and the problems that they have been experiencing. I remind Opposition Members that the steel industry, for example, to which we all attach importance, for years was operating at a vast loss—a loss that amounted to some £500 million a year. Today, that same steel industry is operating at a profit. If we are concerned and anxious to see a future for Ravenscraig within the steel industry, no one is going to convince me or the public as a whole that the prospects for Ravenscraig are not infinitely better when it is part of a profitable steel industry than when it is part of a loss-making one.

There is also the position facing the shipbuilding industry in Scotland. Naturally, I share the concern of all hon. Members about the current problems facing UIE.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill) *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking points of order in the middle of the Secretary of State's speech.

Mrs. Fyfe: It is not a point of order; it is—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Lady kindly resume her seat so that we may get on with the debate?

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie) *rose*—

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue my speech he may find that some of his interventions are unnecessary.

Although we are indeed conscious of some of the problems facing certain of the yards, let us remember that, within Scotland, Yarrow has been successful in tendering for a major order for frigates from the Ministry of Defence. Govan has been successful in winning major orders for Chinese ferries. Indeed, the chairman of British Shipbuilders paid tribute to the support that he received from the Government which enabled Govan to win that order.

I have some further information which I believe will be welcome news to both sides of the House. As the House knows, the Scottish Transport Group recently sought tenders for a new ferry for its subsidiary Caledonian MacBrayne to serve South Uist, Barra, Coll and Tiree. I am pleased to tell the House that a most attractive tender has been received from British Shipbuilders' Appledore Ferguson yard in Port Glasgow. I have today given approval for the group to proceed with discussions with the yard on the terms and conditions that must be agreed before an order is placed. That illustrates how, under the Government, shipbuilding in Scotland has become sufficiently competitive to win orders that are of importance to our work force.

Dr. Godman: Naturally I am delighted to hear the news concerning Ferguson, but I point out to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that the Government have reneged on their promise to place three orders with Scott Lithgow. That promise was made 16 months ago in the wake of a huge order going to Vickers at Barrow. When will the Government honour their promise to my constituents that those small orders—what I called a "sweetie" at the time—will go to Scott Lithgow? "Honour the promise" is what I said to the Government.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman felt able, before his somewhat more explosive comments, to welcome the announcement that I have just made.

With regard to the other matter that he raised, he is well aware that there have continued to be intensive discussions between the Ministry of Defence, Trafalgar House and Scott Lithgow with regard to the orders.

Dr. Godman: Sixteen months.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman must not assume that responsibility for that delay necessarily rests with the Ministry of Defence. The hon. Gentleman should take account of that fact.

Mr. Worthington rose—

Mr. Rifkind: No, I shall not give way.

This debate is part of the Loyal Address in reply to the Queen's Speech. I wish to refer to the two substantive and radical Bills that are included in the Queen's Speech. First, there is a major item of housing legislation. Before Opposition Members give vent to their normal comments on housing, I remind the House that it was indeed during the course of the last Labour Government that gross public capital investment in Scottish housing fell by 37 per cent. During the term of this Government, it has already increased by 13 per cent. I remind the House also that, during the period of this Government, the number of sub-tolerable houses in Scotland has been reduced by more than half. That is a record of which we can properly be proud.

Under the present Government, there has been the largest expansion of sheltered housing and housing for the disabled that Scotland has ever seen. I point out also that we have seen an increase in home ownership in Scotland from 35 per cent. to 42 per cent. over the past eight years. The priority that we now quite properly see is not to think in terms of massive increases in public expenditure. The problem that is primarily before us all at present is to ensure that substantial resources are used in a more effective and efficient way with regard to the peripheral housing estates around many of our towns and cities. The housing legislation that we shall bring forward is specifically geared to increase the choice for Scotland's council tenants and to enable those tenants who wish to do so to form tenant co-operatives, housing associations or other forms of tenure.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will you explain—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not doing any explaining.

Mr. Rifkind: The House will be aware that we have issued a consultative document called "Scottish Homes" with proposals to merge the Scottish Special Housing Association and the Housing Corporation in Scotland. If these proposals were to be implemented, it would provide an exciting new way of pioneering the transformation of our peripheral housing estates and the attraction of private sector investment into housing in Scotland in a way that some local authorities have already initiated but on a modest and minor scale. To deal with the problem—

Mr. Rogers rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has been here a number of years now. He knows that if the Minister does not give way, there is no point in persisting. Furthermore, it is a bad example to new Members.

Mr. Rifkind: Not only our record on housing but the radical measures that will be introduced into the House during the course of the Session will enable us to achieve the transformation that is required.

I refer now to education. There, too, we see measures that are of substantial and radical significance to the well-being of those who are interested in education north of the border. Already, under the Government, we have seen an increase in the number of youngsters enjoying higher education. More youngsters than ever before in the history of Scotland are enjoying higher education. We find that, since 1979, the number of youngsters who leave school with at least one O grade has gone up from 69 per cent. to 75 per cent. The number of youngsters who leave Scottish schools with at least one higher grade has gone up 27 per cent. to 33 per cent. We have seen how, under the parents charter, no fewer than 93,000 Scottish parents have exercised their right to choose a school within the state sector, a measure that Opposition Members sought to dismiss.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: As I said to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe), I shall not take a point of order in the middle of the Secretary of State's speech. I suspect that it is not a point of order at all. It is an intervention which the hon. Gentleman wishes to make.

Mr. Rifkind: What we now intend to do—

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: If this is not a genuine point of order, the hon. Gentleman will be severely jeopardising any future attempt that he may make to speak in the debate. If he persists, will he take that into account?

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This debate is supposed to be on regional affairs, and the Welsh Members in the Chamber are waiting for some mention to be made of Wales and the people who live there. We have heard nothing from this Minister except references to sub-tolerable housing in Scotland. I do not know what sub-tolerable housing is. It is a new definition. Will the Minister talk at any stage about the problems of Wales?

Mr. Speaker: If the Secretary of State is constantly interrupted, he will have little chance.

Mr. Rifkind: I have told the House what has been achieved so far in education. We propose to bring to the Floor of the House a major measure to change substantially and significantly the role of school councils in Scotland to enable parents, in co-operation with teachers and headmasters, to have far more involvement in the detail of what takes place in each school. We want a partnership between parents and teachers so that our school councils will have executive as well as advisory responsibility. That should be welcomed by all those who have the best interests of education in Scotland at heart. For years, parent-teacher associations in Scotland have called for a more substantive and significant role for themselves, and I believe that the legislation will help to meet their point.

I am conscious of the fact that the proposals in the Queen's Speech are not those which the hon. Member for Garscadden and his hon. Friends would have put before the House if they had won the general election. It would be churlish of me not to congratulate the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends on winning the constituencies that they did at the general election, but, in the most friendly and constructive way, I caution them against drawing too many conclusions from those results. They have the

[Mr. Rifkind]

privilege, as do all the other Scottish political parties, of remaining a minority party in Scotland. I acknowledge that the Labour party is the largest minority, but it remains a minority. Scotland is a country of political minorities.

Before hon. Members get too carried away with the support that they received from the Scottish electorate, perhaps I may, in an equally friendly and constructive way, remind the hon. Member for Garscadden about something that he has probably already worked out: that the Labour party's share of the vote in Scotland remains less than it was in 1945, 1950, 1951, 1955, 1959, 1964, 1966 and 1970 and about the same as it was in 1979. I know that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends believe that, notwithstanding the results of the general election overall, we should implement Labour party policies in Scotland.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that Labour Members fought the election to try to achieve the establishment of a United Kingdom Labour Government. Let us imagine that they had succeeded in that endeavour. Are they seriously suggesting to the House that if they had been successful a Labour Government would have desisted from implementing Labour policies in England? Are they suggesting that Labour policies would not have been applied in the south of England, where 40 per cent. of the British population live? I remind Opposition Members that, although the Conservative party came second in Scotland, the Labour party came third in the south of England. This is not a theoretical proposition, because we know perfectly well that three of the previous four Labour Governments did not have a majority of the seats in or the votes of the people of England; yet at no time was it suggested that that should be a reason why Labour policies should not be implemented south of the border.

The fact is that Labour Members are as unionist as Conservative Members. They fought a United Kingdom election to choose a United Kingdom Government, and they had better acknowledge the result of that election.

Opposition Members also attach importance to the subject of devolution—[HON. MEMBERS: "You used to."] That is correct, but, unlike some others, I analysed and drew conclusions from the result of the referendum. It is not a matter of dispute that during the election campaign in Scotland one of the subjects that was least raised by members of the public with candidates of any party was constitutional change. That was evidenced by the opinion poll in *The Scotsman*, which suggested that about 96 per cent. of Scots did not believe that the issue would dominate their choice in the election. On a BBC Radio Scotland programme last Saturday, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) admitted that devolution had not been an issue on the doorsteps during the election campaign—

Mr. Maxton: Will the Minister acknowledge that I then went on to say that Scot after Scot after Scot was saying to me and my colleagues that we should have a greater say in our own affairs? They do not argue about how it should be established; they tell us repeatedly that they want to have a say in and some control over their affairs.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman says that, but he also says that the matter was not raised with him on the doorsteps. Where was it raised? It was the experience of

hon. Members on both sides of the House that issues such as unemployment, housing and health were considered to be significant.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Secretary of State refer to the opinion polls that were conducted specifically on the issue of devolution or independence for Scotland? They have shown repeatedly that, when asked the specific question, up to 80 per cent. of the Scottish electorate want to have some control over affairs in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I do not dispute that the opinion polls suggest that. The hon. Lady will also know that the opinion polls suggest that a majority of people does not want the solution offered by the Scottish National party. But I did not see a change in the policy proposed by her party simply because of the odd opinion poll here or there. The hon. Lady and her hon. Friends stuck by their policy, although they lost the leader of their party in the process.

I noticed during the campaign that Labour candidates paid little attention to the proposals for tax-raising powers when they mentioned devolution. It is worth remembering what they would mean, if implemented. If the Scottish block grant were transferred to a Scottish assembly, about £5 billion would be available to a Scottish Executive in a devolved system of government. If a Scottish assembly wished to supplement that revenue with additional tax-raising powers and if, for example, such an assembly wished to increase its revenue by about 10 per cent.—that is not a substantial amount—that would result in a need to increase the income tax paid by the average Scot by no less than 20 per cent. because, using 1983 as the base figure—that is the latest figure for which we have proper details—income tax raised in Scotland amounts to about £2.5 billion. I advise Opposition Members that not only the Conservative party, but the Scottish chambers of commerce and the CBI in Scotland have drawn attention to the enormous damage that would be done to the Scottish economy and to the prospect of attracting investment into Scotland if, as a consequence of the success of the Labour party, such an assembly, or whatever, were created.

I am happy that there should be a debate on these issues throughout Scotland, and between the different political parties, over the coming years — [Interruption.] Opposition Members know perfectly well that this issue was not a major one during the election campaign, nor have they previously sought to draw attention to it.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): In the 1970s the right hon. and learned Gentleman won a great deal of respect from hon. Members of all parties, and indeed throughout the country, because he was recognised as a man of principle who resigned from a shadow ministerial position because he was against the anti-devolution stance of the Tory party. What has changed since then, apart from the fact that demand for devolution is even greater in Scotland now than during the 1970s? Has the Secretary of State been bought off by the Prime Minister, who has given him a well-paid job as governor-general of Scotland with no mandate? Why has the man of principle of the 1970s become a man of no principle in the 1980s? Why does he not advise the Prime Minister that, unless she delivers to the people of Scotland a devolved Parliament with legislative and economic power, he will resign as Secretary of State?

Mr. Rifkind: I always like to listen to the self-proclaimed Robespierre of the Labour party. The hon. Gentleman claims to be a great man of principle who trusts the people, but we all recall that in an earlier incarnation he was the Member for West Stirlingshire. We notice that he was so confident of his popularity in Stirling that he — *[Interruption.]* The Member for West Stirlingshire is now my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). We know that the hon. Gentleman's judgment on these matters — *[Interruption.]* If I remember correctly the hon. Gentleman's constituency is now Falkirk, West. However, that is another matter.

Mr. Canavan: Answer the question.

Mr. Rifkind: There is little evidence that any issues, other than those of the economy and other domestic matters, were put before the electorate in any substantive way during the recent campaign.

I do not wish to detain the House for much longer. However, before I sit down I issue a challenge to the Labour party. First, I challenge the Labour party to remember that its historic contribution was a United Kingdom party that was seeking to become the Government of the United Kingdom. We all know perfectly well that the Labour party's initial conversion to devolution came about because of its fear of the Scottish National party. We all know that when fear of the SNP disappeared, it was replaced by a deep sense of frustration, and because the Labour party could not win the United Kingdom election it wished at least to continue — or rather to achieve — a monopoly of power in Scotland.

I challenge the Labour party to acknowledge that if it is relevant to the people of the United Kingdom as a whole, it should remember what it said in its party document on devolution, which was published a few years ago. That document referred to economic problems in Scotland, and stated that Scotland's economic problems "are very similar to those of Merseyside, the North and, indeed the West Midlands. They must be dealt with in a national context, and therefore, in terms of broad United Kingdom strategy, are best tackled by the United Kingdom Parliament."

The Labour party should accept that challenge to seek to persuade the people of the United Kingdom. Opposition Members should accept that the issues that matter to their constituents are the economy, housing, health and education, not the structure of government. The Labour party should accept that challenge and recognise, as does the rest of the world, the transformation of the United Kingdom's economy.

Opposition Members have expressed disappointment that there is no reference to devolution in the Queen's Speech. Indeed, there is not a reference to the form of devolution that the Labour party apparently wish to achieve. However, there is a reference to devolution in the Queen's Speech. In fact, it occurs throughout the whole of that speech and affects the whole of the United Kingdom. The devolution that matters to ordinary people is the devolution from local to central Government that we are proposing for council tenants to increase their freedom of choice. The devolution that matters is the devolution that we are offering to ordinary trade unionists to be free of the undemocratic control of the trade union bosses. The devolution that we are offering will enable parents to have a greater choice in the education that affects our people. That is the devolution that matters to the people of the United Kingdom, and I commend it to the House.

4.37 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I start by congratulating the Scottish group of Conservative Members on their excellent turn-out in this debate. The Government have 60 per cent. of their Scottish strike force on the Back Benches and I hope that all three of them found consolation in the comments of the Secretary of State. I do not think that his speech was one of the more positive contributions that he has made. It had a ragged air of desperation and an atmosphere of "back to the wall". At one point the right hon. Gentleman was reduced to the unlikely pose of pretending to be friendly and constructive. If I may say so, his speech seemed to owe a good deal to Central Office clipping services.

However, I do not want to go in for a display of rhetorical flourish this afternoon. The facts are eloquent enough and the time has come for some plain speaking in this Chamber. I welcome the opportunity to make clear what the Labour party expects from the Government in this term and, more importantly, what Scotland expects from them. Many of my points will be echoed by my hon. Friends from Wales and the north, and by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who will deal in detail with some of the problems of the regions when he replies to the debate.

Britain is undoubtedly a harshly divided country, as was reflected in the polarised political opinions that we saw in the recent election. There are 22 hon. Members who represent the cities of Scotland, including Glasgow, and 20 of them sit on the Opposition Benches. There are 72 Scottish Members of Parliament and 50 of them wear the Labour colours. Only 10 hon. Members represent the Scottish Tory party. They are a bewildered group of survivors who wander in a hostile environment.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: Yes. I know a bewildered survivor when I see one.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): The hon. and learned Member appears to have lunched rather well.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do everything well.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) wishes to consider the question of division in Scotland. Between Eyemouth and Nithsdale there are 23,000 Labour votes and between the Black Isle and Mull there are 32,000 Labour votes. However, there are fewer than 11,000 Labour votes in the whole of Perthshire. If Opposition Members think that they have a mandate to govern Scotland, they have something coming to them.

Mr. Dewar: All I can say to the hon. and learned Gentleman is that in his case occasionally excellence shades into eccentricity.

I am particularly satisfied with the absolutely splendid election results for the Labour party in areas such as Dumfries, Inverness and Ross, Cromarty and Skye, which are not normally Labour strongholds, but where we produced results which underline our claim to be a national party in Scotland.

In the pre-election skirmishing there was a good deal of banter, but that has turned into nightmare reality for Conservative Members. I congratulate the hon. Members for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) and for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on their unexpected elevation.

[Mr. Dewar]

They must be astonished to find themselves on the Government Front Bench. Scotland is equally astonished and somewhat dismayed to see them there.

The hon. Member for Stirling will have an exciting life in the Scottish Office. I listened with fascination to the way in which the Secretary of State paraded the high public grant for Scottish opera as one of the Government's achievements. I remember the hon. Member for Stirling publicly protesting at that "waste" of public money. When that great dispute is finally settled and the power struggle in the Scottish Office is resolved, every one of us will want to know which hon. Gentleman will resign. The unexpected promotion of the two hon. Gentlemen—I wish them well—is striking evidence of how hon. Members have had to be promoted into the firing line to fill yawning gaps left by their party's ever-lengthening casualty list.

This is not just a Scottish phenomenon. The Labour party has achieved tremendous results in the north and in Wales. [Interruption.] Wales is left with only eight Conservative Members out of 38 seats and the north with only a handful of Conservative Members. Wales may have something of a persecution complex when it sees the pre-emptive counter strike with the arrival of the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker)—a carpetbagger and, most of all, a reluctant one, bereft of dignity and political prospects.

We must ask why this has happened. It was partly the recession and partly the effects of the depression and divisions in society. It is a proper condemnation of the Government's performance. But it was more than that. It was a rejection in Scotland, the north and in Wales of the assumption that lay behind the Conservative election campaign that those in work do not care about those out of work, that those who have cannot care a brass farthing about those who have not, and that the voters were uninterested in what happened next door, in the next street and certainly in the next town. A feeling of community and togetherness meant that we stood against the policies and philosophies that the Conservative Members represented in Scotland. It was a common inheritance from the past eight years. Unemployment in the north is above that in Scotland and we had to revolt against the indifference that the Government had shown.

Referring to the north-south divide, the Secretary of State said that it went back to the industrial revolution. We should be grateful that he did not follow the example of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who said that it went back to the days of Elizabeth I. Both show an unutterable complacency and failure to recognise that we expect Governments to do something about the problem, not merely to comment in bad historical terms about how long it has existed.

In Scotland 551,000 people are in receipt of supplementary benefit. That is 240,000 more than it was when the Conservatives came to power. The number in receipt of family income supplement increased by 140,000 between 1979 and 1986. Still Ministers come to the Dispatch Box and prate about recovery, success and social cohesion. It rings desperately hollow in the ears of the people who returned 50 Labour Members for Scotland.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was in Edinburgh on 23 June when he made a speech in which he said:

"The future for the Scottish economy is bright. You have embraced the new technologies, new industries, and new opportunities in the service sector. And many of the more traditional industries which have been through a difficult spell are emerging reinvigorated."

Perhaps he would like to tell that to the work force at UIE and McKinnons who are at the centre of only the latest pressure point and disaster area in the Scottish economy. I hope that the Scottish Office will ensure that if the important contract from Conoco does not go to the UIE yard it will be because it is genuinely not the lowest tender. Certainly there is doubt about that point.

Scotland is worried about the indifference and irrelevance of the philosophy preached by the Government. The Queen's Speech is completely poverty stricken. Scotland has three lines and two Bills and that in no sense measures up to the crisis Scotland faces. We shall deal with what is there on its merits when it comes before the House. I do not object to the strengthening of school councils, but I want to look carefully at how it is done and what lies behind the proposal. I certainly do not object to improving the stock of rented housing in Scotland, but if that is a euphemism for implementing the plans in the consultative document "Scottish Homes" it has nothing to do with the problems facing my constituents and most people in Scotland who are worried about structural defects, dampness, a lack of choice and the real problem of the savage cuts in housing resources.

In 1978-79 the Labour Government contributed £238 per public sector rented house as their share of the costs; in 1986-87 that contribution had dropped to £52. Sixty-seven per cent. of the housing stock is now outside the housing support grant system.

Mr. Fairbairn: Quite right.

Mr. Dewar: Some anonymous Member says "Quite right". If he looked at how the housing stock in Scotland is deteriorating and saw what that was doing to the quality of life of ordinary Scots, that remark would drip either with ignorance or insincerity.

I favour a variety of tenure and believe that in some cases partnership with the private sector is appropriate. But it must not be a cop out or an excuse for further cost-cutting exercises.

Then there is the question of the poll tax. It is unwanted and unworkable in Scotland and the election result made that clear. It was introduced purely and simply because the Government thought that it would cement their vote and save what they regard as their traditional seats. On Friday *The Times* drew attention to the considerable worry about the Scottish effect. Many Conservative Back Benchers are understandably uneasy about what will happen south of the border when the same silly road is tramped by Ministers. We on the Labour Benches have no intention of giving up the campaign, of nodding through the statutory instruments or of giving up the unremitting argument to mobilise opinion against a tax which is unrelated to the ability to pay and will be an administrative nightmare.

The Secretary of State suggested that we were obsessed with unemployment. We have watched the alarming and irresistible rise of unemployment figures in Scotland and we are familiar with the same problems and scourge in the north and in Wales. Unemployment has increased and, despite this month's figure, is still increasing. It should be diminished. No one can be proud or satisfied that more

than 350,000 Scots are trapped in dole queues. I shall congratulate the Government genuinely and in a heartfelt way if we discover that a downward trend is now starting, but I suspect that a great deal of work must be done before that is established.

Since 1979 we have lost more than 200,000 jobs in manufacturing industry. Last year the Scottish Development Agency and regional development budgets were cut by more than £100 million. Given the problems we face, that is simply perverse. Industrial investment is still about 20 per cent. below 1979 levels in real terms—a position which the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) welcomed in the House as some sort of Government achievement. That was a blinkered piece of loyalty which commanded my rather doubtful admiration and, as he is now a Minister, he has been well rewarded.

A comparison of the third quarter of 1986 with the average for 1979 shows that the index of industrial production and construction is down 4.4 per cent. Where are the signs of industrial recovery there? Male earnings in Scotland as a percentage of the English and Wales average are down 3 per cent. since 1979. I am sure that the Secretary of State will accept that we have a right to look for results. We want to see jobs at Caterpillar. We recognise, and I hope he does, the key position of the steel industry in Scotland, Wales and the north.

I accept that there has been change—there had to be—and that change has, in many ways, been irreversible. In less than a decade employment in the steel industry has dropped from 207,000 to 54,000. In the same period, output per person has gone up from 95 tonnes to 258 tonnes. I do not cavil about that; I congratulate the steel industry on it and I am glad that it has happened. However, we have reached the point of no return in terms of that industry and steel capacity. In terms of Llanwern, Port Talbot, Scunthorpe and Ravenscraig we must now stand firm and make sure that the threats—threats there are in plenty—are repelled.

For the sake of expediency and the Prime Minister, privatisation of the steel industry was nudged into the wings during the election campaign. We had the somewhat unlikely spectacle of the alliance being more enthusiastic about it than the Government. I do not wish merely to keep it in the wings; I wish to drive it from this building and away from the stage. I do not believe that privatisation of Ravenscraig can offer any secure future for that plant. Eurofer has suggested a cut in capacity of 15.3 million tonnes. I noted that the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw), the former Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, said in the House on 16 March that no reductions within that total would affect steel capacity in the United Kingdom. He went on to say that he could not, of course, prejudge what would happen after 1988, but we are interested in precisely what happens after 1988. The hon. Member for Pudsey has, in any event, been knighted and dropped and there was hardly a ripple as he went.

We do not want to hear the Secretary of State say that the steel industry is doing well and is making profits. We all recognise and acknowledge that. We want to know that there is a secure future for the major steel plants, and for Ravenscraig in particular. We expect that reassurance soon because the guarantees run out in the very near future.

We expect a stand to be taken to defend what is left of the shipbuilding industry. Govan's recent experience with

the Brittany Ferries order is something that should greatly interest the Scottish Office. It is common knowledge that the lowest tender did not succeed and that nationalism appears to have ruled. I take it that the Secretary of State is a good European and I hope that he will pay more than lip service to that principle and will go into battle with good effect on that issue.

Scotland is in a state of discontent, and it does not give me pleasure to say that. The discontent is real, almost tangible. There is concern and unease and in some parts of our society it shades into anger. Today, there has been a delegation in the House from local government and the Scottish Trades Union Council. The delegates from Glasgow must have enjoyed the tribute from the Secretary of State to which I have already referred. The delegation reflects the mood that exists in Scotland. That mood is not some sort of artificial property belonging to a small group of activists. It is something that we meet in our constituencies and as we move around the country. It is a mood that cannot be shrugged aside.

It is not enough for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to give us a constitutional lesson and to argue that the United Kingdom mandate is all that matters. He admitted that the United Kingdom is made up of component parts—the very name illustrates that. The system is under stress and the structure under strain because there has been no attempt by the Government to accommodate the needs of at least one part of the United Kingdom.

I believe that devolution is important because it recognises the Scottish dimension. It is not an idea that has come lately to the Labour party. I do not need the right hon. and learned Gentleman to tell me why the Labour party was founded or what it stood for. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman goes back to the days of the founding fathers, Keir Hardie, the Red Clydesiders, the Rev. James Barr and the activities of the Parliamentary Labour Party in the 1920s and 1930s it is clear that a devolution package—a greater say in Scottish affairs—was built into the thinking of the Labour party. It has a respectable pedigree. In a sense we have come home on that argument. He must accept the genuineness of our commitment, even if he continues to disagree with it.

Mr. Forth: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, in attempting to open up the argument for constitutional reform in Scotland based on the general election results, Members from other parts of the United Kingdom may wish to go further in reviewing the constitutional position of Scotland? For example, there may be a review of the existence of the Scottish Office and the overrepresentation of Scotland in this House. If we were ever to have some sort of assembly in Scotland, with sole say over Scottish affairs, we would argue south of the border that we ought to deny Scottish Members any say in essentially English affairs.

Mr. Dewar: Given the hon. Gentleman's views, I can well understand why he went poaching for a seat in the south. I believe that his remarks will be extremely unpopular with his right hon. and hon. Friends in the Scottish Office because the last thing they want to do is to suggest that the Scottish Office position and the Conservative party position is the abolition of administrative devolution and of separate Scottish Office responsibility. That seems to be the argument that the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) is putting.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend has made a perfectly fair point. Does not the hon. Gentleman appreciate—if not, does the Leader of the Opposition appreciate—that if Scotland was ever to achieve the home rule that the Labour party seeks, it would be simply a matter of time before England expected the same home rule and would not allow or appreciate the involvement of 70 Scottish Members in determining domestic English issues?

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): What did the Secretary of State say in 1976?

Mr. Dewar: If the Secretary of State is saying that the logic of my position is that there should be parallel developments in the rest of the United Kingdom, I have a fair degree of sympathy with him. I certainly accept that, but it is a matter for those other parts of the United Kingdom which we will have to watch. Does the Secretary of State follow the logic of the argument that, in a United Kingdom Parliament that will continue to be of enormous and overriding importance to the Scottish people—a United Kingdom Parliament that considers defence, foreign affairs, fiscal policy and overall economic policy—there is no sense in saying that one wishes to reduce Scottish representation? If the Scottish representation is right now, it will continue to be the right representation in those specific areas. That is a logical argument that can be broken only by the kind of naked prejudice that we have seen from the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire.

I believe that devolution is a way of buttressing and strengthening the United Kingdom. My position is very different from that of the nationalists. I accept that my mailbag is full and is groaning with invitations to abandon the policy that Scotland voted for and to move into some sort of quasi-nationalist position. The Labour party will not do that and there is no logic in doing so. The Scottish National party did well—there are three reasons for saying that—in a situation in which it was the principal challenger to the Conservative party. However, when it came to a straight contest with the Labour party, the hon. Members for Western Isles (Mr. McDonald) and for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) sit with me and that is the way Scotland voted. The SNP got 14 per cent. of the vote—less than the polls had predicted, less than it hoped for and expected, but I believe more than it deserved.

The assembly is an option that was endorsed by Scotland on 11 June. How will the Government respond to that? There has been some confusion about their response. Lord Gould, the chairman of the Scottish Conservative party, blows hot and cold—but then he was in the plumbing business. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) said that there would be devolution over his dead body. I am not sure whether that was a figure of speech or a promise. In any event, may I reassure him that I do not believe that that is a powerful argument one way or the other?

I suspect that there are many Conservative Members who want to say no but who see little wisdom in dying in the last ditch for the status quo. Many believe that devolution is right and that it is necessary to respond to the public mood in Scotland. I suspect that the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), although he has been discreet and loyal in his statements but who has a long history of interest in this matter, is one of the most distinguished of that group of Conservatives. The Secretary of State was once of that

mind. I understand that his conversion is quaintly based on the conviction that Scotland does not want an assembly. He said it again today. That was one of the kernels of his argument and the pillar on which he bases his conversion. However, I believe that it is a challenge to which we must rise. But given the enormous evidence of the voting patterns only a fortnight ago, I am curious as to what sort of evidence the right hon. and learned Gentleman would accept. I should have thought that the results of the general election would take any reasonable jury into our camp.

If the Secretary of State is saying that there is no evidence, he should say what evidence would satisfy him. I believe that Scotland wants devolution. The people take the view that there is nothing wrong and much that is right with more say for Scots over Scottish affairs within the framework of the United Kingdom. They believe that democratic control over administration, to which Conservative Governments have contributed and which is already in place, will improve our political structure, and that there is a right for an assembly to shape the public spending priorities in the massive budget that would be its responsibility. Legislative control over the central domestic issues of Scotland is something that I believe will strengthen the United Kingdom—

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: No. I am almost at the end of my speech.

The House is familiar with the arguments. The question is whether the Government will act on them. The question is being asked increasingly with sharp-edged persistence by growing numbers in Scotland. I give fair notice to the Secretary of State that we in the Labour party will play our part in maintaining the campaign, and I hope that we get help from other sections of the Opposition Benches. That is very much on the agenda, and it will remain very much on the agenda. The process that I envisage is designed, I hope not in vain, to encourage positive thought on the Conservative Benches. It is an effort to concentrate the mind of the Government on the need to respond. I have already said that statutory instruments will be scrutinised as thoroughly as primary legislation and that the poll tax will not in any sense be speeded on its way.

I should like to draw attention to the strange case of the Scottish Whip who is not there. I assume that the failure to appoint a Whip from the Scottish Conservative Benches is an oversight that will be remedied by the Government. I presume that otherwise business will be conducted directly with Scottish Office Ministers. I say that as an expression of intent.

A great deal must be done about the Select Committee. I was interested to hear the Secretary of State boasting about Locate in Scotland. I remember the hard fight against any Scottish voice in those matters that was conducted in the Select Committee by the present Minister of State, but undoubtedly the Select Committee played a useful role and can continue to do so. If the Government are in difficulties over staffing it, I should be glad to add to the normal number of Labour Members of Parliament on the Committee. Why should it not more nearly reflect how Scotland voted? I expect proposals from the Government before the House rises for the summer recess.

We are in a serious situation, and certainly we in the Opposition will take our responsibilities seriously.

Everything that we can do within the rules of the House will be done to keep not just the one issue of devolution but the many other areas of concern very high on the parliamentary agenda. The Government cannot get away with business as usual. That would be an extremely dangerous course, and obstinacy would be no service to Scotland or the rest of the United Kingdom. I say that soberly and without flourish because I believe it to be true.

5.3 pm

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): The Gracious Speech will occupy us for some 18 months, but, as has been made clear in all the comments that have followed it, it has set the agenda for this Parliament. Today we are considering the social and economic divisions in our country, but I am sure the House will recognise—indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) reflected it in their speeches—that the most acute manifestation of those divisions is the concentration of relative deprivation in the stress areas of our cities. I am pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who has had much experience in those matters, is to reply to the debate.

I unreservedly welcome the priority that the Government are now to accord to those issues, but let us recognise that we shall be judged now by the standards that we ourselves have set. What are the objectives that we should have for those stress areas? They are to create communities where the public services are good enough and the private sector choice is wide enough so that people want to live in those areas, so that they are proud to be associated with those areas, and so that the communities are socially sufficiently broadly based in order that increasingly they are able to support themselves. That will never come about when anybody who is able to exercise choice does so in a way that acts against the best interests of the stress areas.

If the ambitious inner-city parent joins the queue for suburban comprehensives to escape from sub-standard stress area comprehensives, not only do the inner city schools suffer, but the teachers get the message, follow the parents and move. If the moment the entrepreneur in the inner city feels that his business is off the ground he accepts an offer to go to the nearest new town or moves his company to the suburbs, it is the inner city that he leaves that suffers. If the skilled worker, anxious to buy his own home, goes to the green field, of course he gains, but he leaves the inner city short of the skills that he takes with him, and the employers rapidly follow the direction in which the skilled worker went.

I wholly support those who want to see excellence in the quality of public provision, but if the majority of people, and the overwhelming majority of trained, skilled, and prosperous people, want ownership, private sector choice and personal opportunity, they will in a free society pursue those things, and find those things. The only people to suffer as that more prosperous element of society exercises a choice and leaves the inner city will be the more dependent members of society, who increasingly will be concentrated in the stress areas because the strong have gone and the more dependent do not have the strength to exercise a choice on their own behalf.

Therefore, the first lesson is clear—that the quality of public service provision and private sector choice and success are interwoven and the link is unbreakable. Many

of the Government's programmes are rightly designed to address those issues of choice, opportunity and local responsibility. In housing, education and provision of competitive tendering, the thrust of the policies in the Gracious Speech is clearly right, but I urge the Government to accept two thoughts. In the exchange of generalisations that has to be the characteristic of much of policy discussion, the first may be dismissed as a matter of detail, but I believe that it is fundamental to achieving results.

I do not believe that civil servants in regional offices, looking over their shoulders to London, and overworked Ministers provide that co-ordination of Government resources upon which effective action in the stress areas is based. It has never worked. The new town corporations worked because they were single-purpose authorities, locally based and able to decide without the delaying processes of Whitehall. The urban development corporation ended the inertia of overlapping local authorities and nationalised bodies. In rebuilding the stress areas we need an English development authority to fuse the talents of the civil servants with practical commercial entrepreneurial expertise, to provide a single focus for decision and action, and to bring urgency to the task.

Secondly, Ministers must understand the scale of the task on which they are embarked. In the past few days, in every newspaper I have read praise for the London Docklands Development Corporation, which is spending £60 million a year of public money in one of the most exciting urban renewal programmes on earth, and for the Merseyside Development Corporation, which is spending £30 million a year. Yet I keep reading in the same newspapers of Ministers arguing that one cannot solve the problems in the urban areas by throwing public money at them.

The truth is that one cannot solve the urban problem by simply throwing public money at it. Nor can one solve the problems unless one is prepared to use public money to eradicate yesterday's scars, to clear the dereliction and to enable the urban environment to reach standards that make it competitive with the fringe and the south. Nor can one attract the large sums of private money that are now being led into investment in the urban areas unless it is perceived that the Government have the commitment and the confidence in those areas to give them a promising future.

In other words, to attract the private sector the Government must put their money where their mouth is. If the last eight years have proved one thing, it is that the targeted use of public money can generate private investment on a scale greatly in excess of public funds. The private funds will not flow into those areas in any other circumstances—

Mr. Dalyell rose—

Mr. Heseltine: Many other hon. Members want to speak, so I must be brief.

Finally, I want to make one other point to Ministers who are drafting their legislation. I share their ambitions for the stress areas. I share their view that incomparably the best way forward is in voluntary co-operation with local government. In reality, whatever may be said with a proper display of political responsibility, most local authorities will co-operate and secretly welcome a great deal of what is included in the Queen's Speech.

[Mr. Heseltine]

However, not all local authorities will co-operate. Frankly, not all will co-operate under the shadow of the poll tax legislation. Today is not the day to debate the details of that issue. I recognise that I am unashamedly a prisoner of my past. Twice I have advised Conservative Cabinets and shadow Cabinets against this form of local authority finance, and twice, at least, they have accepted my advice. I must say that I have not yet seen any reason to change my mind. I shall listen to the reasons why my right hon. Friends changed theirs. What no one can question is that, as proposed, the issue will be controversial for the whole of this Parliament. Under its shadow, one must question how many parents in stress area schools, or how many tenants on rundown estates, will vote to take their schools or their estates into an uncertain future against the advice of their councillors, communities, unions and the serried ranks of politically motivated activists.

Of course, such people will vote to do so in the more prosperous areas and I shall support them in every way that I can. However, I would not assume that they will do so in the stress areas. They may, but I would advise the Government not to bank on that assumption. Therefore, I believe that, if they do not already possess them, Ministers should take reserve powers to bring about the changes that they seek. This Parliament, this House of Commons and the Secretaries of State are the custodians of standards in this country. From time to time, it is true that we have delegated that responsibility to local government, but even then never exclusively, and never exhaustively.

We have never hesitated to set up new town corporations when a specific task demanded that. We have never hesitated to set up housing associations to compete with local government. Anyone who believes that Parliament left education to the local authorities should remember what happened to the grammar schools. I have seen reform based on the assumption of voluntary co-operation with vested interests tried in this House time and time again, and have seen it fail time and time again.

I beg the Government to remember, when addressing the areas of most acute stress, that the first Government of which I had the privilege to be a member set out to reform the unions by voluntary registration, but the unions would not register. We argued then that council tenants should be able to buy council houses, but not even all Tory authorities gave them the right to buy. We had to legislate to give people that right.

We urged competition for the provision of local government services, but now, in order to make any significant inroads in that direction, we are being compelled to legislate. We urged local government to rebuild its communities, but in the end we had to create the urban development corporations to bring about that opportunity.

So I say to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for the Environment, "Be sure you have the powers to rescue those in society without the strength or without the experience to know how to rescue themselves." There is no shred of constitutional theory that suggests that the will of Parliament should be frustrated by the local political attitudes and arguments that Britain has so decisively rejected in the recent general election.

The concentration of relative poverty in inner cities is as old as city life. It is international and historic, and there are no short-term or superficial solutions. That is not to say that there is nothing that can be done. On a limited scale, parts of our inner cities are now being rebuilt. What is happening in the east end of London and of Glasgow and, on a smaller scale, on the banks of the Mersey is not a patching process attempting to slow decline. It is altogether more optimistic than that. It is a partnership of the public and private sectors to rebuild balanced, vibrant and self-sustaining societies. It is literally rebuilding new towns in old cities.

What we now want from the Government is a coherent, national strategy to share the growing warmth of national prosperity with those who have been left for too long, too far, out in the cold.

5.16 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said that he was a prisoner of his party—

Mr. Heseltine: Past.

Sir Russell Johnston:—of his past. I am sure that he will always be a vocal prisoner and a problem for the warders.

It would be tempting to follow him in his support for the priming capacity of public money in rundown areas. The debate has been chosen as one on the north-south divide, as between the Government and the official Opposition, and the fact that I intend to focus my remarks on Scotland in no way means that I do not appreciate that that problem is a real and continuing one for the north, the south-west of England, Wales and patches of urban areas, which are otherwise rich, as the right hon. Member for Henley has just said. It is a question of time.

The Secretary of State for Scotland—I note that he has already departed—has said that he will rule Scotland as if the Tories had won 72 of the 72 Scottish seats. That is a strange, depressing view of democracy, which, if it is to work, must involve a recognition of the different attitudes and priorities of groups and individuals in society. I hope that the Secretary of State will not close doors even before they have been politely knocked on. That would be foolish and arrogant, and I hope that the Secretary of State is neither of those things.

During my wanderings through Scotland in the general election, a well-wisher gave me an election address. I wish to tell the House about some of the things that it says:

"We will set up a Scottish Assembly to make decisions on Scottish Affairs in Scotland."

That is categoric and clear.

"A Scottish Development Fund will be set up, funded by oil revenues, to pay for special projects . . . An Oil Conservation Board situated in Scotland to determine the future rate of development . . . Full encouragement to Councils to build more houses to put an end to the long waiting lists . . . Domestic rates will be abolished within five years and replaced by taxation based on ability to pay."

That was the election address of the Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), in October 1974. At that time, he was the chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland. Therefore, what he said in his election address presumably carried not simply the weight of a common-or-garden Back Bencher, but the weight, influence and significance of the chairman of his party. Of course, he has been in the Cabinet for some time.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) commented on the views of the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State well knows that the Conservative party has no record of rigidity about the nature of Scottish government. He also knows, even if he does not like it, that in 1955 the Conservative party polled more than 50 per cent. of the vote in Scotland, the highest vote since the war. I do not think that there are any new Scottish Conservative Members present, but it is worth reminding the new English Members who have strayed in to give a semblance of balance of this and that that that vote has now plummeted to 24 per cent. The Secretary of State ought to contemplate that with some humility, because his party's decline was not sudden and it certainly reflects the dissatisfaction of a great majority of Scots about the way in which the Conservatives have run our country. There has been the rise in unemployment, the restriction on local government and the services that it provides and the decline in manufacturing industry and the response to it.

There was a profound unrealism about the Secretary of State's defence of Conservative policy in Scotland. I do not deny that he is a good debater, but phrases like, "You do not worry about the odd opinion poll here or there on devolution" are so lacking in realism that they are appalling. He even went back to the industrial revolution. One must ask why it is that other countries in the European Community, like Germany with its federal system, have not suffered our levels of unemployment or their differential impact. He talked about housing, but never said that 26,000 families in Scotland are now officially homeless. That is a vast increase on previous years. To suggest that in some way a reform of the powers of school councils will change the education system is quite unreasonable.

The Labour party now claims to speak for Scotland and is pressing strongly for a Scottish assembly. On 30 November 1966, I stood where I am now standing and introduced, under the ten-minute rule, a Bill for self-government in Scotland. That was during the period of office of a Labour Government, but I did not receive very much encouragement. The hon. Member for Garscadden may berate me, but I suspect that if the Labour party believed that a Scottish assembly would produce a Conservative majority it would oppose it root and branch.

Mr. Home Robertson: Why?

Sir Russell Johnston: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman cannot answer that question. Many people write to me saying that we should all get our act together and produce a common position — [Interruption.] I am not talking about my own personal act. While it is true that almost all of the people who write about that are not involved in party politics and do not really understand how they function or the loyalties and motivations that they require — [Interruption.] The hon. Member for Garscadden must concede that I have loyalty.

I say seriously to the Labour party and to the Government that they must reconsider their approach to electoral reform. I am certainly of the view that we will never have Scottish self-government without electoral reform. The inconclusive nature of the 1979 referendum did not reflect a rejection of the idea of home rule because people do not normally reject the idea of governing themselves. It reflected the fear of people in rural and semi-urban areas of Scotland to the north and south of the

central belt that their legitimate geographical and political aspirations would be subjected to unrepresentative domination by the Labour party. The Labour party may not like that, but it is a fact.

Even in this very good year for the Labour party in Scotland, it got only 42 per cent. of the vote. The Opposition may say that "only" is a pejorative word. I accept that, but 42 per cent. is equivalent, almost exactly the same, as the percentage that the Tories got in the United Kingdom as a whole. If we had proportional representation, the Labour party would have 31 Scottish seats and not 50. The failure to give Scotland a Parliament would lead to a disunited United Kingdom, but a Scottish Parliament without PR would lead to a divided Scotland. Without PR, we will not have a Scottish Parliament.

Mr. Home Robertson: As the hon. Gentleman may know, I support the case for proportional representation. I am interested in the line that he is taking. He is saying in some kind of code that he would be opposed to the establishment of a Scottish assembly unless it included proportional representation. That seems a most bizarre attitude for the hon. Gentleman or his party to take. Perhaps he could clarify the point.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman expresses his personal point of view. He is personally a decent chap, but it is the company he keeps. I did not say anything in code. I say clearly that I would oppose any proposition for a Scottish Parliament that did not include electoral reform, because I do not believe that it would improve the representation of people in Scotland.

I know that there is great pressure on time, so I shall conclude by speaking briefly about the fact that a new Parliament and a new Government should always allow opportunity for reassessment of policy. I hope that the Minister, in winding up, will make it clear that the Government, in response to the election and to what is happening in Scotland and in the areas of England and Wales about which I have already spoken, will concentrate on a reduction of unemployment. In the case of Scotland, that means more money for the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

I hope that the Government will espouse the idea, originally put forward by the Liberal party, of a rural development fund. That suggestion was later supported by the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. It also means ensuring that urban aid, despite the separate administration by the Scottish Office, does not pass Scotland by. It also means taking a positive view about Ravenscraig. To use a common EC phrase, I respond en passant to the remarks of the hon. Member for Garscadden about Ravenscraig. Despite certain aberrations that took place during the election, our commitment to Ravenscraig is unquestioned.

Hon. Members have spoken about the poll tax; and the Government should listen to the advice of the right hon. Member for Henley and others. Without question, it is certainly the view across the board in Scotland that the poll tax should be suspended, and it is our position that there should be an urgent and immediate examination of whether a local income tax could be introduced. I still believe, and said several times during the election campaign, that such a tax is perfectly workable and would be infinitely fairer than that which the Government propose.

[Sir Russell Johnston]

I should like to speak longer, but time is against me and I do not wish to deny an opportunity to other hon. Members who are anxious to speak. The Secretary of State for Scotland has both an enviable and an unevidable office. He is to be envied because he has the power to do things, to decide things. Hon. Members will understand me when I say that I have been here since 1964 and do not find it fun only being able, year after year, to say that we should do this or that. I should like to be in government and do things, and I envy the Secretary of State that opportunity. He should also have some humility. He is not to be envied if the power proves to be a chimera and simply ties him to the chariot wheels of the flawed ideology that Scotland certainly and decisively rejected.

5.29 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): The tribute that I pay to Ken Weetch, my predecessor as the hon. Member for Ipswich, is not merely conventional. I liked and respected him as an opponent. He served the town and people of Ipswich well and faithfully for more than 12 years and his personal popularity as a local figure was undoubted. However, in the end even that personal popularity could not outweigh the unpopularity of the Labour party and the ideological baggage with which it lumbered him.

To the delighted surprise of the Ipswich bookmakers, and to the consternation of the majority of their clients who had backed him to win at odds of 8:1 on, Ken Weetch was defeated and I—incidentally an expatriate Scot—find myself here in his place.

Those incautious gamblers who backed Ken Weetch to win at 8:1 on would have done well before placing their bets to visit the council estates and check the way the wind was blowing. In those Ipswich council estates opinion moved decisively in the Conservative direction and ensured my victory. Not unconnected with that is the fact that on those same Ipswich council estates the social and economic divisions of the past are fading fast.

If there has been one measure in the past 20 years that has done more to bring to an end social and economic divisions in this country it is the Housing Act 1980, which first gave council tenants the right to buy their homes. On some of the estates in Ipswich, no fewer than one in three of the houses have been bought by tenants. Those estates are no longer divided economically and socially from the rest of the town. Owner-occupiers and council tenants live side by side, to their mutual benefit.

However, the favourable social and economic developments on some of those council estates are offset by the acute shortage of housing for rent. The very fact that Ipswich is a fast growing and prosperous town has led to a surge in house prices which has put home ownership well beyond the means of too many first-time buyers.

Those who need a year or two to save for a deposit before buying a home of their own, those young people who want to leave home and set up on their own, those who need emergency accommodation because of a personal crisis such as a marriage breakdown, those who wish to move from areas of high unemployment to obtain jobs and meet the skill shortages that many Ipswich enterprises now face, all look to the privately rented sector. Sadly, for the most part, they look in vain.

In Ipswich and elsewhere in many towns and cities there is a desperate shortage of privately rented accommodation. The statisticians tell us that the privately rented sector in this country has shrunk to 8 per cent. That contrasts with 43 per cent. in West Germany and 32 per cent. in the United States. The Rent Acts are the main factor to be blamed for that. That legislation has suffocated the privately rented sector. It has damaged the very people that it was set up to protect. Just how pernicious the Rent Acts have been was revealed in what happened in 1974 after the Labour Government extended the protection of the Rent Acts to furnished tenancies. The direct result was that no fewer than 410,000 private dwellings ceased to be available for rent and another savage twist was added to the decline of the privately rented sector.

The weakness of the privately rented sector undermines the efficiency of the labour market. It exacerbates the problem of homelessness. It restricts choice. It discourages people from moving. It traps them in their existing accommodation and it reinforces economic and social divisions.

The time is long overdue for the revitalisation of the privately rented sector of the housing market. Such a revitalisation is one of the keys to sustaining the revival of our national economy and to breaking down social barriers. That is why I warmly welcome the proposed legislation to extend the scope of assured and shorthold tenancies and to reduce rent controls.

5.36 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I listened to the speech made by the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine)—another new Member—with interest. As a new Member, I have the privilege to follow the former Member for Durham, North-West, the right hon. Ernest Armstrong, who many hon. Members will know had a deep and abiding respect for all kinds of people, whatever their creed, colour or background. As Mr. Armstrong demonstrated in the House, he has a particular respect and love for the people he so faithfully and loyally represented for 23 years, the people whom I now seek to represent, the people of Durham, North-West. Mr. Armstrong also showed his abiding commitment to parliamentary democracy in the House, and he showed that to the House when he acted as Deputy Speaker for six years. I have learnt many things from him. However, the most significant thing that I have learnt is the importance of listening not just to what we hope people are saying, but to what they are really saying. I want to urge that quality on the Government.

The people in the north are looking for signs that the Government are listening, that they understand the seriousness of the problems that we face, that they have the will to tackle those problems and that they have the imagination to develop policies to address those problems. How can I persuade the folk of the north and of Durham, North-West that the Government understand the seriousness of the problems that they face when the main attempt to address industrial regeneration in the north in the past three weeks has been an exhortation for us to care more about the recreational activities of Japanese businessmen?

I assure the House that if Ministers want to visit Durham North-West they will find leisure facilities in abundance. We have dry ski slopes and we even have the

first wet ski slope in England. We even have golf courses. However, we do not have jobs. The same local authorities that have striven to ensure that the environment is as good as it can be for the people have witnessed the loss of more than one third of manufacturing jobs since 1979. How can I persuade the folk whom I represent that the Government have the will to tackle those problems when, according to Government figures, the levels of deprivation in my constituency equal those of any inner city ward? Yet last year we were told that we no longer qualified for priority cash because the people lived not in cities, but in towns and villages. Indeed, we were told during the election campaign that Consett was a boom town. We also heard that, on normal measures of deprivation, Consett rated as the poorest town in Britain. The reality is that my people do not believe that they are living in a boom economy.

Will I be able to persuade my people that the policies that are set out in the Gracious Speech have within them the imagination to tackle the problems that they face? In many respects the most radical policy in the Gracious Speech that addresses my constituency is the proposed poll tax. All my people will face at least a 30 per cent. rise in the amount that they have now to pay yearly in rates. No one can persuade me or the folk of my area that that will liberate us. It will mean that we shall be paying more for poorer services.

Nor will the policy that is aimed at punishing young people who refuse to undertake aimless training schemes liberate them. On Friday evening, a 17-year-old came to see me. He is desperate to be given the opportunity of real and meaningful training. He had complained to his YTS employer that day that he felt that continually creosoting fences was not increasing his skill as a painter and decorator. Understandably, the employer said, "Well, son, if that is your attitude, you can leave. There are plenty more who want your job." This young man does not want to leave the YTS. Instead, he wants real training and the opportunity to develop skills in which he can have pride. We are asking for real jobs and for real training.

Our experience tells us that the problems of poverty, unemployment and deprivation cannot be solved by the free market or by remote manoeuvrings in Whitehall. The public squabbles during the last week of the Departments of the Environment and of Trade and Industry over which one will have responsibility for the new inner city policy fills us with foreboding. We want a system of government that recognises the importance of matching resources with need. We need more resources in the north, and the people of the north have voted overwhelmingly for the right to have a much more powerful say in their own future. We have voted for that, for the development of regional government and for ending the social, economic and political divisions in our society. We have voted for the right to play a role in the reconstruction of wealth-creating industries in the north.

Durham, North-West and its people have laid the foundations for Britain's economic prosperity. Folk in Durham, North-West dug the coal and produced the steel and they are not looking for handouts. We want the opportunity to demonstrate our loyalty and to use and develop our skills by being at the centre of industrial regeneration. Only when areas such as Durham, North-West can once again feel that they are part of building a prosperous economy can we begin to talk about the United Kingdom.

On 11 June the Government won the general election but lost the nation. The north and the nation generally are looking for an understanding of the real social and economic divisions in our society, and we are looking to the Government for a commitment to changing them.

5.45 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): It is my duty as well as an honour and a pleasure to congratulate my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) and the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) on their maiden speeches.

My hon. Friend spoke of the changes that are taking place in his city, which I know well, as I was brought up in it. He succeeds a Labour Member who was, and is, a fine man. I am sure that there is no doubt about that in all our minds. However, as my hon. Friend said, despite his personal qualities and popularity, he was unable to stand against what my new hon. Friend rightly identifies as the tide of ideas and the change that is taking place in communities such as Ipswich, which is sweeping away the old collectivist solutions of the Labour party of the past. Those solutions have little relevance to the modern problems that we have to solve.

The hon. Member for Durham, North-West spoke with feeling and strength about her area. Again, she follows an excellent Member, Ernest Armstrong, who was a friend of many of us. It will be a hard act to follow, but I am sure that the hon. Lady will rise to the challenge.

Although the debate began with a furore about Scottish affairs, I hope that those who come from areas where the Labour party is not quite so prominent as in Scotland will be allowed a word or two this afternoon and evening. As I understand the opening speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), the demand is that Scotland should have control of its own affairs. That is not a new demand. Indeed, it is a familiar one that takes many of us back to the great parliamentary rows of the late 1970s.

Mr. Home Robertson: The right hon. Gentleman ain't seen nuthin' yet.

Mr. Howell: Yes, indeed. If the behaviour of those on the Opposition Benches during the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is any guide to the way in which the Scots would run their own affairs, it could well be that devolution would leave the rest of us much better off. I dread to think, however, what it would do to the poor Scots. I recognise—I am sure that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends do as well, and more than have been given credit for doing so—the colossal problems that have faced, and do face, the Scottish economy in the huge restructuring that the modern information technology age is forcing upon that immensely able country. I recognise also the jarring social difficulties that ensue. I greatly admire the undying enterprise and energy of the Scots that is being demonstrated in parts of the area. I am sure that the hon. Member for Garscadden wanted only to illustrate the difficulties and not to damn the enterprise and energy that are being shown. That is a reasonable position for an Opposition spokesman to take.

Miraculous and marvellous things are taking place in the Scottish economy, and some of us have the privilege of examining them closely. Despite these developments, the realism is that Scotland will need considerably more

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cushioning and help in the difficult times ahead. It used to be said by the braver and bolder Scots in the Parliaments of the late 1970s that Scotland would be all right if there were devolution because oil revenues would see it through. We then became involved in a terrific argument about which side of the dividing national line the great oilfields of the North sea really lay. Although oil prices may look firm in this morning's newspapers, there is no doubt that 12 months from now we shall begin to see extremely low oil prices. All the oil industries of the higher-cost areas of production will be in great difficulties, and these will have to be faced by the nation unitedly, as a whole kingdom. That is why I think that in the years ahead more cushioning will be required to ensure that our Scottish friends, brothers and cousins come through all their difficulties. I very much doubt whether that cushioning will be available if there is devolution and a tax-raising assembly in Edinburgh.

Those are the general remarks that I want to make about Scotland. I want to concentrate on the theme of alleged, and, in some instances, clear, divisions between communities, groups and families in their circumstances and outlook. I want to bring the rest of Britain into my remarks.

I shall begin with the interesting maiden speech of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), which he delivered on Thursday evening. I was not in the Chamber at the time, but I have since read the report of his speech. I have considerable sympathy with a part of his thesis, which is one that we should all hear more of and examine. It is based on leaving local communities alone as far as possible so that the local government, business and enterprise of an area can work together. Let there be as much diversity as possible and as little imposition of national conformity in the way in which we develop enterprise and new jobs. That is the theme that should be allowed to flourish.

When the hon. Member for Brightside said those things, he struck a good chord. As we move to the new industrial structure and the new labour market patterns of the 1990s, which will be greatly influenced by new technology and electronic communications, it will become easier, rather than more difficult, to allow greater local variety in a whole range of policies and to allow communities to do their own thing.

In that sense, I part company from my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who spoke of the need for an English development agency. That is not the right level at which to tackle the problem. I salute my right hon. Friend's experience and energy, but his proposed solution sounds too general. We need to allow greater diversity between communities. Perhaps local town or area development agencies would work, but let us not have another vast layer of bureaucracy to spend money and achieve very little.

I suspect that most of us would agree with the first part of the speech of the hon. Member for Brightside, but thereafter his thesis begins to come apart. He asks for areas to be left alone, while at the same time recognising—he did not say so, but I am sure that he does recognise it—that the nation's taxpayers, most of whom are on low incomes, because that is the nature of our taxpaying structure, fork out £12.8 billion each year, which is about half the total expenditure of the local authorities.

As long as the taxpayers finance half the activity of local government, the House and the Government have not merely a right, but a duty, to intervene to ensure that their money is used effectively to produce results and is not wasted. The taxpayers' criticism so far must be that, while there has been much sincere effort—even on the part of the Left-wing councils which some of us have some fun condemning as "loony"—to use the billions of pounds for development, their methods have failed. When they were left alone they did not succeed, even with vast resources, and they must not be surprised that taxpayers from the south, the midlands, the north, Scotland and Wales have begun to wake up and ask, "Is this the right way in which to carry on our affairs?"

The hon. Member for Brightside says that his preferred formula is the continuation of what he describes as "the democracy that has existed for generations" in local government. I have to tell him that he and his colleagues have moved into a world of fantasy and fairy tale. The thinly-based democracy with a narrow voting base that has been called local democracy in England, Wales and Scotland has not proved to be a particularly democratic force. On the contrary, it has proved to be a very divisive force. Time and again the obvious divisions between one city and another—not just between one region and another—have resulted from highly divisive local government.

I am convinced that if we want to overcome divisions we are right to start by tackling the issue of local government reform in all its difficult elements. Some people say that rushing into local government financial reform will lead to grave difficulties, that it will not win votes, and so on. However, as a Parliament, we have to tackle the reform of local government and local government finance. We must put a stop to the non-democratic squabbling within local government to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley referred and eliminate the appalling undemocratic principle of taxation without representation, which has dogged and dominated business in all the great cities of the United Kingdom for far too long. That is why we must turn to major reforms.

This may not be the time to go into detail about the community charge. There will be plenty of time to do that in the long nights to come. However, I ask my right hon. Friends to learn one lesson from recent history: do not repeat the mistakes of 1972. In 1972 I was a member of a Government who sought to reform local government. Our error was to reform the structure without touching the finance. I now fear that we are about to reform the finance without dealing with the structure. If we fail to link the two together—sequentially, if not in the same package—we shall make our task infinitely more difficult. That is why we must address our minds very quickly to the functions of local government, which are ill defined and which, for many years, have not been properly structured or set out. In particular, we must re-examine many of the statutory functions placed on local government by central Government. If they are really statutory functions conferred by central Government, perhaps central Government should pay.

Above all, we must re-examine the cost of the education services—the biggest of all the functions placed on local government by central Government—which has undermined local democracy more than anything else. We are on the verge of recognising the truth of something that has been argued by some of us for almost a decade. It is

that education should not be financed through local authorities, and therefore the total expenditure of the local authorities should be much more in line with what they raise locally, whether by the old rating system or by a new community charge.

That is one area in which we must apply policies to overcome divisions. What are the others? The Opposition tell us that this is a divided nation. What is the most visible division of all?

Mr. Maxton: The right hon. Member spoke about the community charge, or poll tax as we prefer to call it. I am not clear whether he supports, or opposes, the poll tax in principle. That was not at all clear from what he said.

Mr. Howell: It is not meant to be at all clear to the hon. Gentleman. I am not making a speech about the poll tax. I am merely suggesting to my right hon. Friends the principles on which they should proceed, although if the hon. Gentleman presses me further I must say that I happen to believe that the rating system has run its day and that a per capita tax may well make sense. However, no new form of finance will make sense if we do not reform the structure at the same time.

I return to the most obvious division of all in our society—the blight of the great public authority estates across the face of this kingdom. They above all else have symbolised division. The most unifying and constructive legislation put through the House in the past few years has been that encouraging tenants to purchase their own houses. That policy is followed closely by the proposals in the Gracious Speech to help those who remain in rented accommodation to change the structure of their tenancies. Closely behind that, if we can achieve it, comes the even more unifying possibility of carefully and sensitively decontrolling the entire structure of the rented accommodation sector. No moves could contribute more to assist unification and to overcoming the kind of divisions about which we hear so much.

The hon. Member for Brightside said that our best hope of achieving unity lay in giving everyone the opportunity to earn, but we must also give everyone the opportunity to own. It is essential to proceed as fast as possible to spread ownership, as well as earning opportunities, to all corners of this kingdom and to every level of income. Obviously that involves not merely expanding existing planned privatisations, but going very much further and widening the opportunities for millions of workers to own shares in their firms.

When I was a Minister, I authorised the privatisation of the National Freight Corporation. The entire staff bought shares and today the owner of a single share finds that its value has increased 41 times over. The National Freight Corporation has given workers an incentive and an opportunity to create one of the most dynamic freight organisations in Europe, out of a rundown rump of the nationalisation experiments of the Socialist past. Let us continue with that and carry it into electricity, and, in due course, let us give the mine workers an opportunity to share in the equity and prosperity in the excellent parts of the coal industry. I hope that my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Energy will think carefully before ruling out the possibility of bringing to the coal miners the ownership, prosperity and opportunity that we were able to bring to the workers in the National Freight Corporation.

Yet another sector where we are wrongly accused of division is over taxation. High taxation, not low taxation, creates divisions in our society and has done so in the past. This opinion has been borne out in study after study, in country after country, and is validated by the most recent study from the World Bank into 20 different nations, one of which is the United Kingdom. It shows that those countries with lower taxes have higher growth and a wider spread of prosperity than those with higher taxes. We are baffled, as we were in the last Parliament, as to why Labour Members, and Government critics outside, call for higher taxation in the name of caring and unity, when all the evidence is that high taxation is a divisive force.

The other great divisive element that we have to tackle is the unreformed welfare and social security system, which is a discouraging and divisive system. My right hon. and hon. Friends in the Government must set about reforming the structure of social security payments and linking them with tax reforms. The modernisation of those linked systems is an essential priority for the Queen's Speech for the 1988 Session.

I am heartened to see growing support in all parties for the concept of the basic income guarantee, a benefit that will be paid to all regardless of their other income status and whether in or out of work, and which will be insulated from other earnings, with all reliefs and other benefits consolidated within it. I believe, and have done so for some time, that this is the only answer. I see powerful new support within both the Government party and other parties beginning to recognise that this is the only way out of the appalling mishmash of the poverty trap into which we have wandered in recent years.

The cry of those who say, "Division, division" against the Conservatives is that two tiers or classes have somehow been created. If we stop and listen, as the hon. Member for Durham, North-West said we should, everything will show that it was the collectivist age that created two classes—the planners versus the planned, the local government bosses versus the bossed about, officialdom versus the individual. The new age into which we are moving, the electronic and information age, will take all that away and allow growth, not merely of the political democracy, which we must keep and expand, but of the economic democracy, in which we all own as well as earn. That, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said at the end of his speech, is true devolution, the true democracy of the 1990s and the next millenium. That is what the Government should be dedicated to achieving.

6.2 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I am pleased to be called now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it gives me the opportunity to pay tribute to the two maiden speeches that we heard, one from the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) and the other from my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong). Each speaker had great confidence and assurance and each paid a well-deserved tribute to their predecessors. We look forward to hearing them again, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West, who spoke with the authentic voice of the north of England. I hope that what she said will be listened to by Ministers.

This debate is not just about Scotland; it is about Wales, the north of England and the regions of the United Kingdom. It seems remarkable that the Secretary of State for Wales has not bothered to attend the debate, except for

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five minutes or so, I know that the Under-Secretary is here, but we expected to see the Secretary of State. He is treating the House with contempt by not being here.

This is a divided nation. This is certainly true politically, as was shown by the election results, but it is also divided in terms of fundamental attitudes towards the Government and the kind of society in which people want to live. In Scotland there is a deep resentment against the Tory Government, a resentment that in many cases goes into actual hatred of what the Government have done in the past eight years. That is a fact. I hope that Conservative Members who do not represent Scottish constituencies will appreciate that I am stating a well-established situation.

The vast majority of the people in Scotland feel that this Government and their policies are of no relevance to Scotland. This is part of the background of, and part of the reason for, our demand for devolution. It is not the only thing that we are demanding, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) made clear today. We are living under an over-centralised system of government, and I have taken that view for a long time. It comes partly out of my experience at the Scottish Office.

To answer a point made by the Secretary of State for Scotland, I point out that I would welcome English Members demanding decentralisation for the English regions. It would get unanimous support from Scottish Labour Members. We need regional government for England just as we need it for Scotland. As a first step, we need regional development agencies on the same lines as the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies — as advocated in the election manifesto of the Labour party in the last election—starting with the north of England, the north-west, Yorkshire and Humberside. The Scots are firm in their support for these plans.

We know that the Secretary of State for Scotland used to be a supporter of devolution. He said that after the 1979 referendum he analysed the situation and came to a different conclusion. What he means by that is that, after he analysed the situation, he decided that his own self-interest could best be served by reneging on his previous commitment to devolution. Now he is a rump Secretary of State and there is little Scottish support on the Benches behind him. They have no moral authority or any real standing in Scotland.

The Secretary of State may bluster as he likes at the Dispatch Box, as he tried to do this afternoon, but that is not relevant to the situation. He has no real authority in Scotland and the people of Scotland understand that. At least this afternoon he did not say—as he said of his previous team of Ministers—that his team at the Scottish Office is the best ever team of Ministers. He did not have the impertinence to say that. It is a case of the second-rate being replaced by the third-rate, or even the fourth-rate. That has been recognised in Scotland.

One of the issues at the election was the poll tax. I was delighted to hear the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) say that when in government he had twice recommended against the poll tax to his colleagues. He is not present now. It is a pity, in view of his strong views against the poll tax, that he voted in favour of the Bill to introduce the poll tax to people in Scotland. I suppose that was on the basis that, while it was not good enough for England, it was good enough for Scotland. There are

fundamental objections to the poll tax, into which I shall not go in detail because we shall have ample opportunity to discuss it if and when the Government bring forward a Bill to introduce the poll tax into England and Wales.

I want to give a word of caution to English Tory Members, some of whom, we understand, are rather reluctant supporters, if supporters at all, of the poll tax. The poll tax was introduced in Scotland as a great popular measure. It would save the Tory party in Scotland, and the spineless bunch of Conservative Back-Bench Members that we had in the last Parliament all supported this. There was not one qualification or one speech questioning the poll tax legislation for Scotland. Where are they now? The Minister who introduced the Bill lost his seat, and many of those who thought that the poll tax would save them are, I am happy to say, no longer with us. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is hanging on by a thread, and the rest have disappeared. The poll tax is simply another of the Government's devices for weakening the powers of local authorities as part of their authoritarian attitude towards local authorities that has been the hallmark of everything that they have done in Scotland, in England or in Wales in the past eight years.

English Tories ought to be warned that this is an unpopular measure and that it is opposed by the local authority associations and by all those who understand or have any real experience of dealing with local taxation. It is a highly unpopular tax among the people who will be affected by it. It is recognised as another device for making the poor poorer and for introducing a tax that is basically in the interests of the better off. I agree with the right hon. Member for Henley that it will certainly not do anything to help the inner cities.

I was delighted with the tribute that was paid by the Secretary of State for Scotland to Glasgow on its transformation over the past few years. It has been a transformation of image. Incidentally, it had nothing at all to do with the Government, but with the Labour Lord Provost, one of my local councillors, Michael Kelly. Glasgow's image has been considerably improved, which I welcome. Unfortunately, the reality is still grim. One of the wards in my constituency has a male unemployment rate of more than 40 per cent. In parts of my constituency virtually every young person is unemployed—not just 20, 30 or 40 per cent. unemployed. They do not believe that the image of Glasgow has been transformed in any meaningful way.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. Does he agree that, when talking of the inner city of Glasgow, it is the height of hypocrisy for the Government to express concern when only three months ago they brought an end to the Glasgow eastern area renewal project when it was only half completed? Does he agree that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) raised a good point earlier when he said that the Government should put their money where their mouth is and introduce similar projects in inner city areas throughout the country?

Mr. Millan: I could not agree more. I initiated the GEAR project. It was the first major urban redevelopment project anywhere in the United Kingdom. I am glad to say that I initiated that in 1976 and, as my hon. Friend said, it has been brought to a premature end. There is still a tremendous amount of work to be done in GEAR and in

other inner city areas. The real problem for local authorities in those areas over the past eight years has been the constant cuts in rate and housing support grants. With additional money, many of the problems we are facing in the inner cities at present could be resolved. Without that additional money from the Government there is no way of resolving those problems, even by tinkering with structures. Those problems will not be resolved on the basis of the Government's proposals, as I understand it, to superimpose something over the heads of the democratically elected local authorities. Again, I say that it will not work without the co-operation of the local authorities.

I welcome private as well as public capital in those areas. One has to work with the democratically elected local authorities. The idea that the Government can come in, sweep them aside and do the job, having deprived them of hundreds of millions of pounds of public money over the past eight years through reductions in grants, penalties and the rest, is a complete non-starter. We need additional resources for those areas. When GEAR was initiated it represented additional resources for Glasgow. It was not in substitution for money that we filched from the local authorities; it was genuine additional money. Unless we get that genuine additional money and the co-operation of the local authorities, the scheme will not work.

One hardly needs to go over the Government's record on unemployment, because it is so absolutely appalling. There has been so much fiddling with the figures over the past eight years that no one believes them. Again, I have to say that as a fact. A significant proportion of the population of Scotland do not believe that the reduction in unemployment in Scotland that the published figures showed in the last month is a real reduction. It is another fiddle with the figures. If the Government fiddle with the figures 19 times, or whatever it is, over eight years, at the end of the day nobody will believe what they are trying to tell people.

The rundown of manufacturing industry in Scotland has been absolutely disastrous. Privatisation now threatens the steel industry. The British Steel Corporation has wanted to close Ravenscraig on a number of occasions. If it had not been a nationalised industry and if we had not been able to bring political pressure to bear, it would have been closed long before now. That is the reality. After privatisation there is no way in which we can save Ravenscraig. The idea of Scottish Ministers trotting out the suggestion that if we privatise British Steel we can save Ravenscraig is nonsense. That is recognised as nonsense by the people of Scotland, and that is why one of our demands following the election is that we get a firm and absolute commitment to Ravenscraig. We do not want a commitment to Ravenscraig until 1988; we want a firm and absolute commitment, particularly as we now have one junior Minister at the Scottish Office who spoke in favour of closing down Gartcosh and who I believe is in favour of closing Ravenscraig as well.

We also want commitments on shipbuilding — an important industry for my constituency. We want to know what has happened about the Brittany Ferries order. That should have gone to Govan Shipbuilders, which put in the lowest tender. Instead, it went to a French yard. We want a determined regional policy from the Government, because, whether we like it or not, an inexorable pull to the south-east of England will be considerably increased by the Channel tunnel. I fundamentally oppose it and hope

that it never happens. There is no doubt that it may be good for the south-east of England, but it will be no good for Scotland or the north of England. Vast resources are being put into the Channel tunnel.

This afternoon the Secretary of State for Scotland said that we are all agreed on regional policy. Here is how the Government agree on regional policy. My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) received a written answer on 12 May, just before Parliament was dissolved. Regional development grant expenditure in Scotland in 1986-87 was £170 million. In 1987-88 the provision is down to £69 million. In Great Britain it is down from £512 million to £211 million. The Secretary of State had the impertinence to stand at the Dispatch box this afternoon and say that the Government are committed to a strong regional policy, but they have cut back on regional aid over the years. That is part of the reason why we have those disastrous unemployment figures in Scotland, Wales, the north of England and in other areas at present. While this policy continues we shall continue to see a more and more bitterly divided and politically unhealthy nation.

The Government fought the election on a theme of selfishness: if one had a job, one did not care that others were unemployed; if one was decently housed, one did not care that others were living in slums; if one could afford private education, one did not care what happened to the state system; if one could afford private health, one did not care what happened to the National Health Service. That was the theme of the Government during the election. Tragically for the country — certainly for Scotland, Wales, the north of England and many other disadvantaged areas — that appeal to selfishness resulted in the Government we now have. We reject that philosophy of selfishness. I speak not just as a Scottish MP when I say that we shall do everything in our power in the House and elsewhere to frustrate those policies that seek to continue more bitterly than ever to divide the nation.

6.19 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this debate and about the way in which the title of the debate is phrased —

"social and economic divisions of the nations and regions of Britain" —

because it is right that we should debate the problems of Great Britain as a whole and not each of its separate parts. I have been distressed by some of the secessionist comments of the Opposition and I hope that they will not regard me as breaking the precedent of a maiden speech by referring later in my remarks to some of the more positive things that are happening in the north of England.

I wish to talk about what the north of England can do to help to heal some of the divisions of our nation but also the help that we require in achieving that objective. I am in a fortunate position in being able to address the House on this subject today because it reflects well on the work of my predecessor, Sir Edward Gardner. But for the way in which he looked after the constituents of Fylde, I doubt whether they would have had the confidence that they showed in me by returning yet again a Conservative Member of Parliament for that delightful part of Lancashire.

Sir Edward is a parliamentarian of note and I am sure that he will be well remembered by the House for three particular contributions to our public life. First, he was

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chairman of the Conservative Back Bench committee dealing with the preparation of the British Nationality Act. Many of the committee's recommendations were taken up by the Government and became part of the legislation. Secondly, there was his pioneering work as Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs. I believe that his visit to the United States on behalf of the House and the message that he brought back to the House and to the country about the dangers of drug abuse in the United States served us well in the development of policy on a problem which bedevils many of our big cities. I am pleased that the resulting legislation will take away the benefit and profit from drug trafficking. I believe that it will serve this country well. Finally, there was Sir Edward's own Human Rights Bill. Sadly, it was narrowly defeated in the House, but I believe that he won many plaudits from his colleagues for the way in which he presented that Bill.

Having succeeded Sir Edward as Member of Parliament for Fylde, a constituency of some 64,000 people, the most oft-asked question to me is where Fylde is. It lies between Preston to the east and Blackpool to the west. On its southern boundary is the river Ribble. To the north, above the M55 motorway, lies the rural part of the constituency, comprising many large, well-run dairy farms. To the south, the signs of success are clear in the employment opportunities offered by British Nuclear Fuels through its pioneering work in the nuclear industry, and by the headquarters of the British Aerospace military aircraft division, part of the largest complex of aircraft building in western Europe. Guardian Royal Exchange is a further major source of work in the area and an example of the way in which the electronic city has transferred work down the telephone line to the north-west. For Members seeking leisure and relaxation, I should mention our many wonderful golf courses, soon to be graced at Royal Lytham by the open golf championship next year.

Watching the election results on television on election night, pleasing though they were, I was distressed at the picture painted by the media of the northern half of the country as being entirely a Socialist enclave. I must immediately disabuse them of that. There are still many Conservative Members serving constituencies in the north of England and some of us were lucky enough to be returned with increased majorities, which suggests a vote of confidence in what the Government have achieved. Nevertheless, one should not go away with the idea that everything is positive in the north of England. When I worked on the border of Merseyside at a time when there were difficulties in the great city of Liverpool, I was asked many times on the telephone whether the whole of the north of England was like that. In such circumstances, one begins to appreciate the problem of the south's perception of the north. Sadly, I must tell the Opposition that many of the actions of Socialist and Labour-controlled local authorities have done no service to the regeneration of the northern cities.

I am extremely pleased that the Government have chosen as a centrepiece in the Gracious Speech the message of inner city regeneration. It will focus attention on the northern half of the country. I hope that it will also give people a chance to look at other parts of the north where there are good, progressive stories to be told. First, however, let us consider some of the divisions. As I have said, there is a division of perception. The north is not a

homogenous part of the country. There are the proud counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire and much good work has gone on there. The north of England is the pivotal point of Great Britain. One has only to look at the motorway network to realise that the north of England is at the centre of this united kingdom. That is an important point in influencing industrial decision-making.

Sadly, people have the idea that the north is a long way away. Ever since I drove round a roundabout in Slough and saw a large sign saying "To the north", I have wondered whether it does not start further south than we realised. In the counties of Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Cumbria and Northumbria up to the Scottish border there are splendid leisure facilities and low-cost housing. So often when one brings people to the north they say, "We never knew it was like this." That is an example of the division of perception that we must try to avoid.

Then there is the division of opportunity. One of the problems for which the south must answer is this. The bearers of new wealth in the City, not so far from this place, flaunt their BMWs and Porsches and I do not begrudge their expertise in earning the money which allows them to do so, but it is very difficult when one talks to a northern entrepreneur struggling to raise venture capital who looks south at the sometimes misjudged use of some of the wealth created down there.

Finally, there is the division of history. Much of the north has declined because many of its industries were old. Driving around the periphery of Liverpool, Sheffield or Newcastle upon Tyne, where I worked, one cannot fail to be touched by and to appreciate the fact that there are still major problems to be tackled. In practical terms, much can be done to tackle the problems. First, there is the question of linkage. I believe that the great business houses in the south, such as Marks and Spencer, can do much by doing business with companies in the north—I worked for a company near the small market town of Ormskirk—in developing new products.

Horticulture is something of a Cinderella in the industrial sphere and it is not often mentioned, but the technology links and the input by Marks and Spencer meant that the company for which I worked was able to develop new strains of tomato. This had two results. It pushed back imports from Holland and it created jobs in the north and north-west of England to provide the market place in this country with a much-needed new product. That is the kind of development that can take place and I appeal to all Ministers who have dealings with our great business houses to emphasise that they should "think north" in their purchasing policies because they have the mechanism to transfer wealth back from the south to the north, as was the case historically from the industrial revolution until the decline of some of our great industries.

Secondly, Ministers should emphasise the positive aspects. So often on doorsteps during the election campaign I was asked what I was doing for the north and when I would get Ministers to come to the north. I should like them to visit some of the successful areas. I have mentioned British Aerospace and Guardian Royal Exchange. A smaller company in my constituency—Neoplants, of which probably no one has ever heard—has pioneered the technique of using new plant material to grow nursery stock for export to the United States and Holland.

If ever there were an example of taking coals to Newcastle, that is it. They have created about 40 to 50 new jobs, using new non-electronic technology. They have taken an old part of the horticulture industry and they have regenerated it. That is the sort of success story that is happening in the Fylde constituency. That is the kind of success story that the rest of the country should learn from and listen to. It will show people that the north is not a blighted area and that there are good points to attract people to locate in our part of the country.

I emphasise the point that was made by the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong). She said that we have to learn the art of listening. I learnt the art of listening. I listened to what local business men—the ones who have brought work, the ones who are expanding business in the north, the ones who are creating jobs—said. They said to me, "Please concentrate on the subject of venture capital. Will you please use all your influence to say to the bankers of this country that it is safer to invest in St. Anne's than in Sao Paolo?" There are companies desperate for money, but the perception of the north is not always the most attractive for venture capital investment.

Secondly, business men have said that many of our companies are benefiting from our positive economic policies that have enabled them to be more competitive in exporting. They have said, "Please maintain that competitiveness." They have also said, "If we can be given the opportunity to run our businesses and be efficient, we will win orders." That is a more positive message from the north of England—a north of England that is rebuilding and is using new technologies to create new jobs.

As an hon. Member who represents a Lancashire seat, I passionately believe in the message that the north can support the healing of divisions within the country. I support the measures in the Queen's Speech. They will speed that process still further.

6.31 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): In addressing the House for the first time, I am fortified by the remarks of a friend who said, "Facing the House of Commons should be no problem after preaching in the Wesleyan chapel in Dinas Powis." The chapel is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower), where I preached on many occasions during the 1970s.

At the outset of my speech, I pay tribute to my predecessor in the Bridgend constituency, Mr. Peter Hubbard-Miles. He was the first Conservative to represent any constituency in the county of Mid-Glamorgan. Tribute must be paid to him for that signal achievement, which of course I hope will be the last. He showed his independence and fighting spirit during the selection process before the 1983 election, when he successfully took his local Conservative and Unionist Association to court and managed to stop the foisting on the constituency of a person who was rumoured to be a friend of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), the present Conservative party chairman. In 1985, at Westminster, his talents were recognised when the then Secretary of State for Wales, Mr. Nicholas Edwards, who has left this place, appointed him as his parliamentary private secretary. Although he no longer represents the Bridgend constituency, he still has an interest in it. He represents a part of it—Porthcawl—on the council of the county of Mid-Glamorgan. Once again, he had the signal

achievement of being the only Conservative on the council—a solitary role that he manages to play with some success for the people in Porthcawl.

It is undoubtedly an immense privilege to represent the Bridgend constituency at Westminster. I am proud to say that, since 1979, I have represented it and eight other south Wales constituencies in the European Parliament. Indeed, my election to the European Parliament in 1979 was a proud moment for my family, and for my father in particular. When I visited him in the summer of 1979, he recalled with some delight the congratulations that he received from all and sundry in his home town of Brecon on his son being elected to the European Parliament. However, when I visited him at Christmas in 1979, his tune had changed. The Prime Minister had been on the warpath in Dublin in November demanding a considerable rebate from the European Community. The atmosphere had become so inflamed that my father did not dare tell anyone that he had a son in the European Parliament.

Unfortunately, such is the content of the Gracious Speech that I fear that my father will suffer from another bout of Prime Ministerially inflamed feelings as the vast majority of people in Wales seethe with hostility at the prospect of a lorryload of Bills that will do nothing to cut unemployment, enhance the quality of life or the expansion of personal liberty and freedom of choice of people in depressed regions such as Wales, the north and Scotland.

My constituents in Bridgend will be particularly saddened and even driven to despair by the absence of specific and direct Government action to deal with unemployment. At the latest count, 3,381 people were registered as unemployed in the Bridgend constituency, even on the Government's restricted and much-altered definition of unemployment. The true figure is probably well over 4,500. If the army of unemployed people from old mining villages such as the one in which I live in Cefn Cribwr, from decimated steel communities such as Cornelly, from commuter communities of the beautiful coastal belt such as Porthcawl, and from the old market town of Bridgend, whose light industry-based growth has seen it expand towards villages such as Laleston and Coity, were to have marched on the jobcentres in my constituency on 8 May—the last date for which official figures are available—they would have found 292 jobs posted around the jobcentres. There are over 3,000 registered unemployed but fewer than 300 job vacancies.

With figures such as that, can the Government seriously believe that their management of the economy has been a success? The Government may misguidedly think so, but the voters of Bridgend, Wales, the north of England and Scotland do not. They emphatically rejected the fairy tales about economic miracles when the marks of unemployment, poverty, dole and desolation were, and still are, to be seen hard by the doorsteps of those in well-paid work and those in not-so-well-paid work who are thankful to have any job at all. What hope of jobs can my constituents in Bridgend look forward to as a consequence of the Gracious Speech? Quite bluntly, none. Not a single measure will create jobs in Wales, and quite a number will cost jobs—for example, the privatisation of water authorities.

Only this weekend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), told business men in his constituency that public expenditure, as a proportion of national income, must be reduced.

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

Along with the unattributed remarks of Treasury officials, who say that brakes will be put on public spending, it bodes ill for the regeneration of already deprived regions.

In 1978, £137 million was spent on regional policy in Wales. This year, planned expenditure is £88 million and next year it is £33.6 million. Yet unemployment in Wales is more than double what it was in 1978. The Government must spend more, not less, on regional policy. As in Wales, so in the Bridgend travel-to-work area, where unemployment has more than doubled. The current figure is 14.9 per cent., which is almost 50 per cent. higher than the United Kingdom figure. Yet in November 1984 the Bridgend travel-to-work area was the only one in the United Kingdom to be chopped from the top to the bottom of the regional aid ladder. It was the only special development area to be downgraded to assisted area.

My plea to the new Secretary of State for Wales, who I am sorry has been unable to attend this important debate, is to review the status of the Bridgend travel-to-work area and upgrade it to a development area, which would be in keeping with the unemployment from which about 4,000 of my constituents suffer.

6.41 pm

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): I am delighted to pay tribute to the two fluent maiden speeches that the House has just heard. When I was elected to the House in 1970, I took the advice of the Whips, who told me to hold back and not to make my maiden speech for some months. I admire the robust independence of my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) and of the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), who have defied that advice—if the Whips are still giving it—and have decided to make their maiden speeches early and well.

The hon. Member for Bridgend paid tribute to his predecessor. I and my right hon. Friends are grateful for the gracious way in which he referred to his political opponent and to the uniqueness of his position as the Member who represented Bridgend in this House and represents Porthcawl elsewhere. My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde referred in appropriately felicitous terms to his predecessor, Sir Edward Gardner, a distinguished lawyer and courteous and kindly politician who won respect from hon. Members on both sides of the House. His tribute was received extremely well by those of us who knew Edward as a friend and colleague for many years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde, speaking as he did in a constructive, forward-looking, optimistic and confident way about the opportunities and the growth in the north of England, served that area of the country well. We look forward to hearing again from him and from the hon. Member for Bridgend, who spoke passionately about the problems of unemployment in his constituency.

The opening speeches in the debate concentrated upon Scottish issues and problems. Members of Parliament from Scotland get a fair share—perhaps more than a fair share—of the time of the House. As a London Member of Parliament, I have not complained about this, nor did I object when, in previous Parliaments, Labour Members from Scotland imposed Labour policies upon England. But the behaviour of some Opposition Members during the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland gave me cause for concern

about the intolerance and singlemindedness of their attitude. The special case of Scotland, which the House has always properly recognised, has been overemphasised by some Opposition Members—I suspect to the disadvantage of the causes that they hold dear.

The problem with today's debate is that we have to select only one or two items from the wide range of subjects mentioned in the Gracious Speech. It is undoubtedly true that the problems of the regions, the separate countries and the inner cities can be resolved only in the context of a sound and growing economy. Although the collectivist and highly interventionist policies of the Labour party have been proclaimed by Labour Members today, I have no doubt that if they were implemented they would weaken the economy and make it much more difficult to solve many of the underlying problems which are part of our history and which it will take considerable effort and time to resolve.

A major theme that flowed from the general election was a recognition in the United Kingdom, and especially in England, of the economic progress and strength that have occurred under this Government. We have low inflation, steady growth from the depths of the recession of 1980-81 and a welcome reduction in unemployment. In my constituency, it is down by more than 20 per cent. since August last year. I reject the comments of the former Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), that the figures have been fiddled. Whatever may be said about the adjustments to the figures during the lifetime of the Government, no adjustments have been made during the past 12 months or more. The change during that period flows from the realities on the ground. It is irresponsible of a former senior Minister to make such criticisms of civil servants, who compile those figures properly and impartially and are not subject to political direction.

I welcome the bullish forecast of the London Business School this morning. My only worry is about the rapid growth in domestic credit. The aggressive marketing by banks and retailers of their credit cards sounds a warning note which I hope the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his colleagues will examine carefully. Continued economic strength is essential to deal with our social problems.

One area in which London is disadvantaged is its hospital service. No one can deny the significant extra funding of the National Health Service since 1979. The figures were mentioned often during the election campaign. When the Government came to power in 1979, a little less than £8 billion was spent on the Health Service. Now the figure is £21 billion, which represents a 30 per cent. plus increase in real terms. But the extra is not evenly distributed. Primary care—the general practitioner services, which are not cash limited—has taken an increase of well over 30 per cent. in real terms during the past eight years, which has left less than 30 per cent. for hospital and community health services.

The Resource Allocation Working Party proposals which were first adopted by a Labour Government when the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) was Minister for Health, and which were carried on under Labour and Conservative Governments, have meant that the extra resources have gone more to the north, the north-west, Scotland and elsewhere than to London and the south-east. Sub-regional RAWP, as it is called, has meant that that trend has been accentuated in the south-east of the country with more resources being

allocated outside London than in the London area. The net effect of that has created special problems and difficulties for London. In real terms, little if any increase in resources has gone into that area during the past five or six years.

Other factors, especially the recent sharp rise in house and flat prices in the London area, have combined to create problems in the recruitment and retention of nurses. The West Middlesex University hospital in my constituency is short of more than 100 nurses. That has led to ward closures, cancelled operations and lengthening waiting lists. Of course, the fact that there are such staff shortages, which go wider than just nursing staff, places an extra strain on the staff, which exacerbates the problems of retaining hospital staff. Special action is required. The Government's ready acceptance of the nurses' pay award, its full implementation and the Government's provision, from the contingency fund, of the necessary extra money for meeting the costs of the pay award have helped.

However, in London specific extra measures are now urgently required. My plea today is for early action by the Ministers concerned. It makes no sense for hospital services, where the equipment and premises have a high value, to be unused or inadequately used because of staff shortages. I know that the patients who are made to wait for treatment or whose operations are cancelled feel strongly that further action is required.

Public service pay in general will and does continue to present problems. This is an area with which I was especially concerned some years ago when I was Minister of State for the Civil Service. I am sorry that greater progress has not been made in adopting the recommendations of the Megaw committee concerning the future determination of Civil Service pay. I welcome the agreement reached by the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, which is my own union, and I am glad that the Society of Civil and Public Servants has called off its strikes, which I did not think were justified. I hope that there will be some useful results from the discussions which the leaders of that union propose to have with officials and perhaps Ministers as well. I hope also that the Civil and Public Services Association—the biggest of the Civil Service unions—will overcome the terrible burden of a Militant-dominated executive. I reiterate my support for Megaw-type systems of pay determination and hope that the unions concerned will agree to them.

I turn now to rates and to the community charge, or the poll tax, which seemed to be mentioned in almost every speech today. I must confess that the short paragraph on page 63 of the 77-page Conservative manifesto which dealt with this issue was not the most burning issue of the campaign in my constituency. Indeed, the only comments that I heard about rates came from people who complained bitterly about the sharp increases in rates that had been imposed by the Labour leaders of the Ealing and Hammersmith councils—65 per cent. and 50 per cent. respectively. My constituents were anxious that nothing similar should happen locally and were pleased that a Conservative Minister had rate-capped the London borough of Hounslow.

I have always thought that the doctrine of the manifesto was somewhat bogus. Indeed, I argued as much in the 1974-79 Parliament when I thought that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment held a similar view. As I have said, it was a pretty bogus doctrine

at the best of times. Therefore, I was surprised to hear my right hon. Friend using the manifesto argument in such a simplistic form on the radio last Friday. In any case, he got it wrong. The manifesto did not say, as he said that it did, that we would replace domestic rates "with a community charge." The manifesto said that we would replace domestic rates with "a fairer community charge." The word "fairer" is of considerable significance and is the nub and the heart of the matter.

When I was a Treasury Minister we considered carefully and with great diligence the proposition of a poll tax or a community charge. However, we judged then that it would not be a "fairer" tax. Of course, I stand by those conclusions. However, what seems to have happened since then? Presumably Ministers have become convinced that it would be "fairer" and a satisfactory replacement at least for the domestic rating system in Scotland because that was the legislation that they brought before the House. I was prepared to go along with that—[*Interruption.*]—yes, I voted for it—and in one of my regular newsletters to constituents I wrote:

"Domestic rates in Scotland are to be replaced with a community charge (poll tax) system which if successful will be implemented in England after the General Election."

That was my view and I stand by it. However, I am not at all happy with the suggestion that parallel actions should be taken for England at the same time. We should see how it works out in Scotland, or perhaps we should suspend its implementation until all the many serious snags that are now being spelt out in the press and elsewhere, including our debates on the Gracious Speech, are resolved.

My constituents are certainly fed up with and deeply critical of the present domestic rating system. However, it would be a betrayal of their interests to replace this unpopular but in revenue terms efficient and effective tax with anything other than a "fairer" alternative. I reiterate the word "fairer." That must be the Government's objective in meeting the clear statement that was set out in our manifesto.

There is no specific reference in the Gracious Speech to environmental issues. However, my constituents are affronted by a major planning application for a massive development involving hundreds of acres in and around Osterley park in west London. Much of the land is designated metropolitan open land and it is inconceivable that permission for all or part of these plans should be given. My constituents and other local residents in the neighbouring areas are likely to be faced with heavy legal costs in resisting the plans at a public inquiry. I understand that powers exist under which the Secretary of State could refuse to entertain a planning appeal that is clearly at odds with the development plan. I wish that he would do so in this case. Such action would give a clear and welcome signal that the Government remain absolutely determined to maintain and, where appropriate, extend the green belt and other areas of open land which are so prized by urban dwellers.

My final two points are short House of Commons issues. The first relates to Members' pay. After the unseemly and unhelpful ministerial actions four years ago, I hope that there is no truth in today's story in *The Times* about the Prime Minister's intentions. The compromise proposal, linking Members' pay to a Civil Service grade, which was agreed in July 1983, should be endorsed. If Ministers decide to deploy the pay roll and Parliamentary

[Sir Barney Hayhoe]

Private Secretaries' vote otherwise, I hope that sufficient PPSs will refuse to co-operate so as to frustrate such a foolish action.

The second House of Commons point relates to television. I have consistently voted to allow the cameras into this honourable House, and I hope that we shall all be given an early opportunity to consider and vote on this matter in this Parliament. It may well prove an interesting Parliament and prove well worth watching.

6.59 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I agree with the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) that we have listened to two interesting maiden speeches. I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) who made rather an assertive speech. I do not know much about Fylde, but I recall that one Bill Beaumont came from there. He once led a rare flukey victory over Wales at Twickenham, and he now appears on television. I am sure that we shall hear a good deal more in this place from the hon. Member for Fylde.

I enjoyed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), and his sincerity and concern for the unemployed of Bridgend ran through it. He is one of the splendid new intake from Wales to these Benches. He brings to the House experience gained in the European Assembly, and over the years he will make a significant contribution to our deliberations.

The theme of today's debate is the social and economic divisions between nations and regions of the United Kingdom—what has become known as the north-south divide. Listening to the opening speech of the Secretary of State for Scotland I would have thought that this debate was just an apology for the Government's dismal record in Scotland, but from personal knowledge I can report to the House that after eight years of this Thatcher Government Wales is certainly in a parlous state. What is more, the proposals in the Queen's Speech are entirely irrelevant to its needs.

The position is rather different as we have a new Secretary of State—an Englishman into the bargain—who did not obtain a single Welsh vote. It has been suggested that his appointment is an insult to Wales; it is certainly an indication of the way in which Wales is being treated by the Government. It is an additional insult that he is not present on the Front Bench for this important debate. Finally, his appointment illustrates the paucity of talent among Conservative Members representing Welsh seats.

The new Secretary of State faces a formidable task and he will do well to remember that the Labour party holds the overwhelming number of parliamentary seats in Wales. I would like to take this early opportunity to draw his attention to the vexed question of mass unemployment which now afflicts Wales. According to the Government's own recent submission to the EC, the overall activity rate in Wales is lower than that of any other region of the United Kingdom and it is expected to remain so in the immediate years ahead. By 1986 the number of people in Wales with a job fell to 901,000—a drop of 175,000, or no less than 17 per cent. That is the lowest figure since records began in 1948.

It is difficult to get a true figure of unemployment compared with 1979 because of the 19 changes in the

method of compiling the statistics. All the changes have had the effect of understating the true level of unemployment, but, despite that, the official figures tell a depressing story. In June 1979, 80,032, or 7.3 per cent., were out of work in Wales. In October 1986 the figures had risen to 174,105, or 14.1 per cent. There has been a minor adjustment downwards in the feverish activity that took place in the run-up to the general election.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Surely the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that unemployment in Wales has been falling over past 13 months and that it has been falling faster in Wales than elsewhere?

Mr. Hughes: Only today the London Business School pointed out that the recent reduction in unemployment owes more to the restart programme than to rising employment. Moreover, it also reports that this trend is likely to continue.

The cost of unemployment is simply phenomenal. It has absorbed much of our North Sea oil revenues, which should have been spent on regenerating British manufacturing industry. Wales has lost 36 per cent., or 113,000 jobs, in manufacturing industry. By contrast, in the past three years south-east England has benefited by a 15 per cent. growth in banking, insurance and finance. Those figures illustrate what we mean by the north-south divide.

Between 1979 and 1985 the average wage in Wales decreased in real terms by 4.1 per cent.—the biggest drop of any region—whereas London's average wage over the same period increased by 6.2 per cent. Unemployment has risen faster in Wales than in any other region, which completely contradicts the Government's argument that lower wage levels mean more jobs. Wales has the lowest average wage of all 20 British regions and it has the highest share of people earning less than the minimum wage. Two thirds of women working full time earn less than the EC statutory minimum wage. Whereas wages in the south-east have soared, it can be said with some justification that it has been at the expense of Wales.

The people of Wales have faced other penalties. For example, water charges have risen at more than double the inflation level in the past three years; rates have increased above the rate of inflation thanks to Government cuts in the funding of Welsh local authorities; and council rents have risen faster than inflation. The proportion of wages spent on rent has increased by 50 per cent., from 6 per cent. to 9 per cent.

The housing crisis in Wales is almost as catastrophic as unemployment. Wales has a much higher proportion of older housing than any other part of Great Britain. More than 40 per cent. of Welsh homes, nearly 450,000, are more than 65 years old compared with 30 per cent. for Britain as a whole. Many people in Wales are living in housing conditions which were considered unhealthy more than 100 years ago. It is obvious and apparent that urgent action is needed to tackle this problem. What is more, a housing drive makes social and economic sense.

Of course, there is regional aid. However, in 1984, to cut that aid in half was a cruel decision. It watered down efforts to renew the Welsh economy after a catastrophic period of closures and redundancies, particularly affecting our traditional industries. I suggest to the new Secretary of State for Wales—I trust that the Minister of State

will convey my message — that the original regional assistance should be restored, and indeed increased, if there is to be any realistic attack on unemployment and depression.

Education in Wales reveals a similar dismal picture. Government cuts have led to inadequate supplies of books and equipment. Buildings have been neglected, classes have been disrupted and the negotiating rights of the teachers' trades unions have been taken away. The Gracious Speech contains the new proposal that parents should pay for the little extras. Of course, that will adversely affect poorer families. The proposal for schools to opt out is causing concern. The director of education in Gwent, Mr. Geoffrey Drought, has warned that any school that opts out could leave itself extremely exposed and could live to regret that decision. Likewise, central Government could close a school at the stroke of a pen and local communities will lose out.

The proposal within the Gracious Speech that is perhaps causing the greatest concern is that for a new method of financing local government, which has become known as the poll tax. A few days ago my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition forecast that that poll tax will bring chaos and lead to the breakdown of local government. For me the most revealing insight has come from reading that the Prime Minister stands to gain £37 per week on her retirement home in Dulwich; the Secretary of State for the Environment will be £19 per week better off; and the Secretary of State for Transport will clear up a staggering £120 per week on his two homes. By comparison, the rates bill of the poor depressed families in the Rhondda valleys — where the wealth was produced to generate the industrial revolution of this country — and the average householder, which was £145, will increase by 300 per cent. to £580. That is the rates bill for a family of four. Where is the justice in this? — the traditional hwara-teg.

All in all, the people of Wales find that the Gracious Speech shows a lack of concern for their needs. The north-south divide in Wales is in jobs, pay, wealth, housing, education, training, youth, middle age, old age and the lack of opportunities for our people. The brief resumé of facts and figures that I have given should serve as a reminder to the incoming Secretary of State for Wales of the uphill task that he faces.

7.14 pm

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): I have the great honour of having been sent to this House by the electors of south Dorset to follow in the distinguished footsteps of Viscount Cranborne, known to all hon. Members as Robert, who is clearly a man of eloquence, intelligence and, perhaps more than any other, integrity. He has a love of south Dorset, and the constituents of south Dorset certainly have a great regard and love for him.

My constituency is an easy one about which to eulogise. Whereas other hon. Members may find some difficulty in saying what a wonderful place their constituency is, there is no one who could deny that south Dorset is a beautiful place in which to live. In case right hon. and hon. Members and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have not booked your holidays, perhaps I can tell you a little about south Dorset.

My constituency extends from Studland and Swanage to Weymouth and Portland, and to the north it goes as far as Bere Regis. We have some of the finest beaches, coves and cliffs in the whole of the country. Hon. Members will

be well aware of Lulworth cove and the naked beauty of Studland. Perhaps that should be the naked beauties of Studland, where there is a nudist colony.

My constituency boasts the Purbeck hills and the white horse that people know so well as they travel in and out of Weymouth. Brownsea island nestles in Poole harbour. My hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) gives up most of the harbour area to my constituency. We have nature reserves in Arne, Lodmore and Radipole.

We are lucky to enjoy not only the beauties, but the natural resources of south Dorset. We possess the Purbeck stone and Portland stone that built most of London. We also possess ball clay and the Wytch farm oil wells. In fact, I probably represent the constituency with the largest amount of oil reserves. We play an enormous part in the defence of the realm. We are home to the Bovington and Lulworth camps; the tank firing ranges and training camps. We possess a naval dockyard and a naval helicopter station, where Prince Andrew is stationed. As regards law and order, the Dorset police headquarters are in my constituency. There is a prison on Portland, the Verne, as well as a youth custody centre.

Industry should not be neglected. Many people believe that among such beauty one would not find a thriving industrial sector that covers the electronics and service industries. The constituency houses the Underwater Weapons Research Establishment on Portland and the Nuclear Research Establishment at Winfrith Heath. South Dorset also has a working nuclear power station. Our farming community on the land covers sheep, cattle and corn. Fishing at sea is still a major industry in south Dorset.

Tradition says that, on these occasions, new Members should be non-controversial. I had thought that with my name, Ian Cameron Bruce, I might be entitled, especially with my ancestry, to talk about Scotland. Obviously, Opposition Members would find that extremely controversial, given everything that they have said today. I thought that I might even talk about Wales, because I was born in Llantwit Fardre, in Glamorganshire. It was good to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). However, to speak about Wales would have been controversial. There are some who would like to see schisms within the country. Perhaps they would like to split me into little pieces. I also thought that perhaps I might talk about Ireland, because I have an Irish mother, but I thought that that might be too controversial. Instead, I asked the permission of one of my hon. Friends, the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), who has been elected to the House as the first Conservative Member for that worthy constituency in Yorkshire, to make some comparison between that constituency and the one that I have the honour to represent. Our constituencies illustrate the north-south divide.

For the past 12 years I have lived in Colne valley, which covers Huddersfield and the surrounding areas. I ran an employment agency that covered all sorts of people, from the unskilled labourer to the managing director. I have to spend a great deal of time canvassing in that area. One hears the attitudes that are often expressed, particularly by Labour Members who come from the north of England. They always say that on the doorstep the most important problem is unemployment. I agree with them. They tell us that there has been a terrible rundown in industry and that

[Mr. Ian Bruce]

there is a lack of job opportunities. Again, I agree with them. They envy me my southern constituency, the land of milk, honey and jobs.

On the doorstep in Dorset, South, one hears a different story. People tell us, "We are OK. We can look after ourselves. We do not need extra jobs. We are really going places." Of course, there are not enough houses to go around. Everybody wants to get into Dorset, South. The people think that it must have been hell for me living in the north of England, with all the deprivation that they hear about, particularly from Opposition Members. They want to do more for the north. They were even foolish enough to select somebody who lived in the north, so that they could give a little extra help to the north of England.

I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will think that those attitudes are typical, but when one gets at the facts, one finds the situation interesting. What are the facts? In Colne Valley, 3,679 people are unemployed. Incidentally, both constituencies have just over 70,000 voters. Clearly, that level of unemployment is much too high, and in my employment agency I did a great deal to try to put that right. But what of Dorset, South, the place with no unemployment problems! Are 1,000, 2,000 or 3,000 people unemployed? It is none of those figures, but 3,968. We have 300 more people unemployed in Dorset, South than are unemployed in Colne Valley. The north-south divide exists, but it exists in people's minds and their attitude to whether they go out and help themselves or whether they do not.

We in the House need to deal with facts, not with myths. I should like to give a few other strange facts from my experience of running an employment agency. We did a great deal to try to get unskilled labourers into jobs—the young people who had great difficulty getting jobs. Let me give a straight statistic, which has no political significance. It is simply one that we used in the employment agency. If one wanted somebody to start work in the morning to do an unskilled labouring job, one had to phone seven people to find one person who would be available to start work in the morning. If one wanted somebody to do the night shift, the statistic was 12 people.

What about skilled building workers? We are constantly told about the half million people in the building industry who are unemployed. I suggest that hon. Members try to find some of those half million people to start work on a building site—people with skills. I am sorry, but they do not exist.

There is a myth that young people do not want to work. In fact, it is the married man with several children who is the most difficult person to persuade to take a job. There is a difficult problem with the over-50s. We as politicians constantly shout at the Government, "Let us spend more money," but unfortunately it is the employers who will not take people on, however well they have been retrained. It seems that they do not want to take on somebody over 50. We have to work at that, to get the employers to think otherwise.

Running an employment agency for a dozen years does not give me all the answers, but I think that I have some idea of what the questions should be.

7.24 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I am not sure of the proprieties of it, but I should like to say that

we have just heard some words that will go down in history. We know the famous words of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) — that the unemployed should get on their bike. We now have the answer to the north-south divide—that it is all in the mind. I am not so sure, and in my maiden speech in the House perhaps I can deal with some of the issues that burn in that part of the north which is the country of Scotland, from which I come to the House.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in the debate on the Gracious Speech. I am privileged to be here and to be able to make this speech. For someone like me to stand here where Charles James Fox once spoke so loud as to be heard beyond these walls, for someone like me to stand here where the great pioneers of the Labour party and the Socialist movement—Keir Hardie, James Maxton and John Wheatley—stood and made the Socialist case is a proud moment for me. That I can stand here in this place where Aneurin Bevan gave his coruscating indictment of the economic system so beloved of Conservative Members is a great privilege for me, too.

That privilege has been afforded me by the electors of the Glasgow, Hillhead constituency who, when they did so, performed a singular act of historical importance, in that it was the first time that Glasgow became a wholly Labour city, proving, as the Secretary of State for Scotland said, that not only is Glasgow miles better, but it has miles more political common sense.

I think that it is appropriate for me to pay tribute to my predecessor as the Member of Parliament for Glasgow, Hillhead, an outstanding Member of the House, the right hon. Roy Jenkins. He had rare political gifts as an administrator, a biographer, a political historian, and an elegant and witty orator, but above all as an outstanding occupant of two of the great offices of state—Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Secretary of State for the Home Department. Mr. Jenkins' gifts have made a significant mark on this country over four decades. Although he has now retired to work in the shadow of dreaming spires of Oxford university, where he was elected as its chancellor, I venture to hope that there will be no mean spiritedness when the opportunity next arises for Mr. Jenkins, through another place, to re-enter these Houses of Parliament.

My constituency is at one and the same time a beautiful and historic yet troubled place. It ribbons along the great river Clyde, where once the great shipyards of the upper Clyde built ships of steel, which sailed the seven seas, laden with the manufactures of what was once the workshop of the world—west central Scotland. There is just one shipyard left in my constituency, Yarrow, which faces the future more fearful than it might have been, given the Government's determination to proceed with the Trident submarine programme and the mortal threat that that represents to the idea of a 50-ship surface fleet, in a Navy that is so necessary to defend our country and to protect and ensure the survival of that vital source of skilled employment in my constituency.

Our once proud Albion motor manufacturers, of world renown, a symbol of industrial strength, has been reduced by the Government's economic policies to a mere shadow of its former self. It has been forced to seek succour in the arms of foreign competitors, pygmies by historical comparison, to secure for itself a place in the market.

Our great universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde, one wholly in my constituency and the other with parts in my constituency, are fearful of their future. They are fearful about their future funding, and about the commercialisation of their great enterprise of learning, about which we await developments with interest. They are fearful of the future for those who study within those great seats of learning, and of how those who study will sustain themselves through their courses and the studies that lie ahead of them. They are fearful of the low student grant which may soon become a student loan—it will begin as a difficult loan and perhaps end as an impossible loan, not only to repay but ultimately even to obtain. Such a system would, of course, eventually alter dramatically the whole basis of access to higher education in this country. "If you can't pay, you are kept at bay" in an education system which increasingly, if the Government's plans come to fruition, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said the other day, will know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

My constituency is chock full of hospitals that have struggled these past eight years to keep bodies and souls together. There are overworked and underpaid staff of all kinds, from the best doctors to those often unsung heroes in the hospital system who clean the floors, porter and cook the food and who receive some of the pious eulogies that the Government sometimes dish out. All the underpaid and overworked workers in those hospitals now face the future in dilapidated buildings with outdated equipment, wondering if they will be as safe in the hands of the Prime Minister as they have been these past eight, mean, penny-pinching, painful years.

My constituency also contains the leafy environs of Broadcasting house, the headquarters of the BBC in Scotland. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will recall that earlier this year those solid and hallowed doors were booted down in the middle of the night by policemen who were sent—abused—on a political errand to intimidate professional journalists of the highest standards, at the top of their profession, and prevent them from doing their duty to their trade, their employer and the public. There may not have been any jackboots, but it was a scene reminiscent of Germany in the 1930s. There may not have been any dark glasses, but it was a scene reminiscent of Greece in the early 1970s. It was a disgrace of which the Government should feel ashamed, and for which they have not yet atoned.

For those reasons and many more, my constituents face a fearful, anxious and troubled future. Since 11 June, however, it has not been only a state of anxiety and a sense of fear that I have detected on the streets and in the city of Glasgow. There is a state of slowly mounting, burning anger, because my constituents face a future for which they have not voted. Their anger is because the people of Scotland now face a future that they have thrice rejected. They are angry because the Gracious Speech appears to offer no recognition of, or concession to, the fact that there is in this country a Scottish dimension to the electoral result.

When I heard earlier that apology for a speech from the right hon. and learned Member who graces the office of Secretary of State for my country—it made no concession or genuflection of any kind to the fact that there was a constitutional crisis in my country and his—I thought that I was listening to the wrong man making the wrong speech in the wrong debate. The Secretary of State's

Government have no mandate in my country and do not speak for its people. It is true that the Labour party does not speak for the entire country either. There are other parties that have levels of political support in Scotland, but, taking us altogether, some 80 per cent. of the people of my country have rejected the Government who none the less sit in governance over us in New St. Andrew's House. If that is not a constitutional crisis, I do not know what is.

It is not too late for the Secretary of State and the Government to hear the voices of anger from the Scottish people. It is not too late to allow our people that for which they voted in the referendum in 1979 and at three consecutive general elections—an assembly in Edinburgh dealing with Scottish affairs. The argument that they have not demonstrated their desire for an assembly is so hollow that I cannot believe that someone of the Secretary of State's intellect believes it. Almost 80 per cent. of the people of Scotland supported parties that stood for some measure of Scottish devolution.

It is not too late for the Government to listen and to turn. Our people are canny. They are slow to rise, but when they have had enough they will rise like lions and their anger will be heard within these walls.

7.37 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): It is a genuine pleasure to be the first to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) on their maiden speeches, which were different in style but both outstanding.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South paid a most apt personal tribute to Robert Cranborne and to his affection for what is obviously a lovely constituency, about which my hon. Friend clearly has encyclopaedic knowledge and for which he has a real feeling. He also showed a real and interesting insight in the contrast that he drew between the Huddersfield area and the north and the south, both in terms of the facts and of attitudes. I am sure that that will be a theme to which he will wish to return in the course of this Parliament, and I know that the House will look forward to hearing him on future occasions.

The hon. Member for Hillhead paid an excellent tribute to Mr. Roy Jenkins, one of the great parliamentarians, historians and Ministers of this generation, and also a man of great personal courtesy. I join the hon. Member for Hillhead in expressing the hope that Mr. Jenkins will have the opportunity, if he wishes, to contribute to the proceedings of Parliament in another place.

The hon. Member for Hillhead comes to the House with a reputation for eloquence and hard work. He will not expect me to agree with some of the points that he made, but his speech showed knowledge, firmness, commitment and the fluency that we expected. I shared a meeting with the hon. Gentleman during the election campaign. It was a rally of the striking civil servants, held on the Tuesday before election day. It was an occasion that might be described as a wee fraction restive. Not only did they boo me, which is entirely to be expected, they even booed the hon. Member for Hillhead; but he sailed through that occasion with no difficulty. While we may not agree with what he says, we look forward to hearing from him and from the other hon. Members who have made excellent maiden speeches in the course of the debate.

[Mr. Allan Stewart]

I should like to comment on the speech by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). His speech contained the general Opposition theme about the so-called north-south divide. We know that the SDP and the Liberals are not on speaking terms these days, and it appears that some members of the Labour party do not consult each other on these matters. We know that, because the theme wholly conflicts with a recent interesting article in the *London Daily News* by someone whom I understand is to be the next leader of the Labour party, the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). He said:

"Firstly, it is important to avoid the simplistic notion that what has happened is simply because of the so-called North-South divide.

A detailed analysis of the polls shows that the regional differences are not a product of geography but reflect the different class composition of different areas of the country." He went on to analyse that, and some Opposition Members would do well to read the article. Earlier in the debate some hon. Members shouted, "We won, we won." I shall quote further to them from the article by the hon. Member for Brent, East. He said:

"The grim truth is that Labour's result in this election is worse than 1983. We have piled up votes in our traditional areas where there are few seats left to gain and slipped back further in the areas of Britain where the population is growing and the vast majority of marginal seats exist." That is the truth of this election.

I should like to concentrate briefly on the Scottish situation and the so-called doomsday scenario that we appear to be in. Of course, the situation in Scotland is potentially serious. It is not a constitutional conflict, but if the political trends of the general election were to be repeated in a future general election, clearly there would be a potentially major constitutional conflict that would be much more serious than the matter of who wins seats. If that came about, it would create a serious problem for the next Conservative Government to tackle. It is important that that does not come about.

If such a scenario occurred—the trends are that such a scenario is clearly possible—a future Conservative Government should not take the path of devolution, a path to which I am totally opposed. There are scenarios to which the House of Commons could quite rightly and properly say that it must go for the least unattractive option. That option would be the end of the Act of Union and an independent Scotland. That scenario is not as unacceptable as has often been suggested, and I say that for two reasons. First, I understand that the SNP accepts the union of the Crowns. Secondly, it accepts that an independent Scotland would be a member of the European Community and for that reason could not pursue extreme Left-wing policies. That would not be because of the constraints imposed by the European Community, but because of the freedom of the Community and the ability of people and businesses to move to and from Scotland as they wish.

It is crucial that the Government take the right decisions in order to avoid that scenario and to regain the confidence of the Scottish people. We are faced with an historic choice. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is receiving a great deal of advice on what to do about Scotland. Most of the conventional advice will be to have a bit of devolution. He will be told, "Let us have a wee scheme, perhaps not as

good as the other schemes. Let us have a bit more public spending, a wee bit more on the Highlands and more bridges to nowhere." He will be told, "Let us have more press releases about the gallant Scottish Office fighting the Treasury." That conventional advice is the basis of the policy that has gone wrong. Traditional paternalism has gone wrong in Scotland, and the policy does not work for a number of reasons.

Mention has been made of public expenditure being high in Scotland. The hon. Member for Hillhead said that Glasgow does not have a Conservative MP. Nor does the Highlands. But both of those areas have done relatively well out of public expenditure since 1979. There is a direct, positive relationship between those two facts. High levels of public expenditure have created a dependence culture in those areas. When there is a problem and people ask what the Government will do about it, it is said that all that is needed to solve the problem is more public money. That has built up client groups in those areas whose whole ethos and existence is geared to asking for more Government money as the answer to everything. We should now fight not on these grounds but on strong Conservative grounds and principles.

I fought the Eastwood constituency openly and explicitly in my election address and at every public meeting as the anti-assembly candidate, and it was on that basis that I was elected. Of course, devolution is popular with the chattering classes—politicians and the media. However, there is much wisdom from the Labour party on the subject of devolution. I should like to quote from the *South Wales Echo*, which is constantly at the top of my intray. In the edition of 25 February 1978 the present leader of the Labour party said:

"The irony of devolution is that it will 'smash beyond healing' the unity of Britain. People who light fuses must expect explosions. These devolution proposals offer a maximum of risk with the minimum of gain to the Scots people."

That was the right hon. Gentleman's opinion then and it was correct. There has been no answer to the west Lothian question or to the question about the role of Scottish MPs. Any move towards an assembly would be the slippery slope towards separation. If it worked well, the demand would be for more powers; and if it worked badly, the demand would still be for more powers. It is a recipe for continuing constitutional conflict and chaos.

I commend to the House the detailed proposals for Scotland that are contained in the Queen's Speech and hope that the Education Bill will prove to be rather more than is presently indicated. In Scotland we must stand firmly on strong Conservative grounds.

7.49 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I follow the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) with some incredulity. I have never heard a Scottish Member argue so eloquently the case for fewer resources to be applied to his own constituency and to his own country. No doubt he comes to the House with some shattering lessons from the general election. He will have plenty of time to contemplate what happened to his 11 colleagues from Scotland who disappeared from the Conservative Benches.

I congratulate hon. Members on their maiden speeches of which I have heard six this afternoon. They all added something to the debate and I should like especially to congratulate two maiden speakers.

The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) made a sincere speech and showed his knowledge of the European Community. His speech also showed his preaching experience in the Wesleyan chapels of Wales.

One of the most impressive major speeches was made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway). In his eloquence, he delivered the genuine message that is to be heard in Scotland. It is high time that that voluble message was heard in this Chamber. The hon. Member articulated that message more clearly than any other hon. Member. Perhaps the speech of the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) represents the other side of the same coin. It carried foreboding in the warning that there is a mood in Scotland not to take no for an answer. There must be new thinking, whether it be new thinking from the hon. Member for Eastwood—which I would not accept—or from the hon. Member for Hillhead—which I would accept.

I have to remind myself that we are debating the social and economic divisions of the nations and regions of Britain. Having listened to the person purporting to be the Secretary of State for Scotland who opened the debate, I could have believed that this was a "Scotland only" debate. The right hon. and learned Gentleman uttered the desperate squeals of a man who had just had his right leg run over by a steamroller. Understandably, anyone experiencing that would concentrate only on his right leg. I am not sure whether I should complain that the Secretary of State did not address the problems of Wales or of the regions in England. After all, he and the Government have no mandate to speak on the problems in Wales. But then, of course, they have no mandate to speak on the problems of Scotland either.

The other startling fact to appear in the debate is that the person who purports to be the Secretary of State for Wales graced the Chamber for only a few minutes, not for the opening speeches from the Front Benches, but to hear his wet friend the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) speak about his version of the poll tax. If the Secretary of State for Wales was taking Wales seriously, he should be sitting in the Chamber and not in the Tea Room of the House of Commons when such a debate is taking place. There is also little point in the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts), coming to the Chamber 15 minutes late because he also missed the opening and vital parts of the debate.

The debate on the Queen's Speech takes place against a background in Wales where the Government won only eight of the 38 seats. The Government received no mandate from the Welsh electorate for the programme that they have put forward in the Queen's Speech. If any party received a mandate in Wales, it was the Labour party. The people in Wales are looking for policies that will answer their social and economic needs. They want policies that will respond to their aspirations. None of those policies is forthcoming from the Government. The Government have been rejected overwhelmingly by the people of Wales. They have no right to put forward policies in the Queen's Speech that take so little notice of the needs of my country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) spoke on Thursday about the question of no mandate, the devastating effects of the proposed education changes and the cuts in public expenditure and on defence. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) also spoke on Thursday about Scotland's

rejection of the Conservative Government. I want to underline one basic question. From where do the rights of hon. Members and of the Government emanate? I should have thought that all Opposition Members would agree that they emanate from the people. Any sovereignty that we possess is sovereignty that we have borrowed for a limited period from the people who have elected us. To that extent, if Scotland and Wales clearly show in the results of a general election that they wish to follow a different course, the representatives of those countries should have the right to follow those courses. At the very least, they should be allowed this sovereignty on a level of government which already exists in our two countries. By that I mean that the Scottish Office exists for Scotland and the Welsh Office for Wales. Those offices have considerable power over everyday issues for the Welsh and the Scottish people.

Perhaps Conservative Members were right to claim that the question of devolution was not raised on the doorsteps. However, electors asked what action was being taken, for example, to attain different policies on unemployment. We must remember that unemployment matters are the responsibility of the Welsh and Scottish Offices. Different policies on housing were requested and indeed we have suffered a devastating series of housing policies in Wales over recent years. Matters relating to health, education, roads and agriculture are all the responsibility of the Welsh Office. Water resources and the privatisation of the water industry are also matters covered by the Welsh Office. They are matters of everyday concern to the people who elected an overwhelming majority of non-Tory Members in Scotland and likewise in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The fallacy behind the remarks of the hon. Member is that he forgets that this is a United Kingdom Parliament. What would happen to the hon. Gentleman's party whose percentage of the vote declined to 7.3 per cent., although he has an extra Member?

Mr. Wigley: It was very condescending of the Minister to say "although we have an extra Member". We were one of the few parties to have a 50 per cent. increase in the number of Members in the House. If the Opposition parties had all done the same, that would have been a better result for the Chamber.

The hon. Member for Conwy bases his concept of sovereignty on the inherent sovereignty of an institution. He believes that the House of Commons, and not the people, has the sovereignty. He believes that that sovereignty is indivisible and that it comes from the top downwards. That perception of sovereignty differs fundamentally from my perception and that of other Opposition Members. We believe that sovereignty comes from the people. The United Kingdom may be united in terms of nomenclature, but if the political pattern is so different in Scotland and Wales from the overall pattern in England—and particularly the domination of south-east England—unless the institutions of Government adapt to the reality of the difference in political aspiration, we are building up a head of steam which will cause enormous problems. The Government must take that message on board now and begin to think seriously about how, if they are to retain a United Kingdom, they will do so in a way that allows people to develop their own solutions to their own problems. They should be able to do this in line with their own values and with the way in

[Mr. Wigley]

which they want to share the burdens of their own communities among themselves and not to put all the burdens on those who are last in the queue for jobs, the poorest or those who have to bear the greatest burdens in the community.

The people of Wales and Scotland have rejected the Government and the contents of the Queen's Speech. The different circumstances are most starkly seen with regard to employment. Conservative Members claim that unemployment is falling in Wales. My goodness, the level of unemployment in Aberdare is 21 per cent., in Holyhead it is 22 per cent., in Cardigan it is 24.6 per cent. and in Fishguard it is 25.2 per cent. Are those levels of unemployment acceptable after eight years of this Conservative Government's policies? Yes, circumstances are different in other areas. In Crawley the unemployment rate is 4.3 per cent., in Basingstoke 4.8 per cent. and in Winchester 4.4 per cent. In the face of that, the Conservatives try to tell us that there is no difference. The difference can be seen in the dole queues, in my constituency and the constituency of the hon. Member for Conwy. If the hon. Gentleman visits Bethesda or Bangor, the hon. Gentleman knows in his heart of hearts that a generation of young people are confined to the dole queues.

I accept that there are housing problems in southern England. However, they are not the problems that are suffered in Bethesda, Llanberis, the Rhondda valley or the Cynon valley. Those areas have the worst housing stock in western Europe and successive Governments have failed to solve the problem. What will the housing Bill mentioned in the Queen's Speech do to solve the problem? I suggest that it will do precious little.

The Government have brought forward proposals for water privatisation. They said that they cannot move forward with a Scottish assembly because it was not mentioned on the doorsteps. How many people on the doorsteps were shouting for water privatisation during the election campaign? Very few, I suggest. The idea of giving away hundreds of millions of pounds of public assets to justify a return on capital for those who will come in and make a quick buck or to increase the price of water to such an extent as to put a huge imposition on water ratepayers in Wales is wrong.

We have heard rumblings from Conservative Members as well as from Opposition Members about the implications of a poll tax. I am certain that there will be no welcome for a poll tax in Wales. There is no need to look in the crystal ball to assess the feeling in Scotland. If Conservative Members would only open their eyes they would see what the future portends in Wales as well.

The positive measures that the Government have brought forward will damage my country. The issues that have been omitted from the Queen's Speech will also damage Wales. The lack of commitment, provision or mention of anything for disabled people is yet again typical of the Government from whom we have suffered for eight years. The lack of commitment to a Welsh language Act, despite the noises made by a former Secretary of State for Wales, the lack of any sign of a coherent regional policy to produce jobs and the lack of any mention of the needs of pensioners will damage Wales.

If any issue stands out from the election campaign, it is the needs of pensioners and the priority that should be given to them.

We have had a general election in which parties have been returned in Wales and Scotland that want a very different Government from that which we have been afforded. The overwhelming majority of the seats in Wales and Scotland have not been won by the governing party. Yet if all the seats in Wales and Scotland had gone to the Labour party we would still have had a Conservative Government. The question is whether the Labour party can protect the interests of Wales and Scotland within the present institutions of government. I have grave doubts whether that is possible, and in saying that I am not criticising the Labour party. Instead, I am criticising our centralist institutions. If democracy is to remain in these islands, the sooner that we have institutions that serve the needs of our people the better it will be.

8 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): As I am the first Ulster Unionist Member to speak in this new Parliament, I wish on my own behalf and on behalf of my colleagues to pay tribute to the right hon. Enoch Powell, who was narrowly defeated in South Down in the general election. He represented that constituency conscientiously and with great distinction for many years. His departure from the House is a great loss to Northern Ireland and to Parliament itself. I hope that means will be found before long to enable his great intellectual capacities and parliamentary gifts to continue to be available.

I have listened with interest to the passionate speeches that have been delivered by hon. Members representing constituencies in Wales, Scotland and other parts of Great Britain. Their speeches present a sorry picture of a divided United Kingdom. There is not merely a division between the north and south of Britain: there is a division between Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the north of England, the midlands and the home counties of England. Never before has a Westminster Government governed such vast regions of the United Kingdom without the consent of the majority of those who live in those areas.

In the general election the people of Scotland decisively rejected the Conservative party. There are not enough Scottish Conservative Members to form a majority on the Scottish Grand Committee. Similarly, the people of Wales emphatically rejected the Government and the new Secretary of State for Wales had to be plucked from an English constituency. There is nothing novel in that, because the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland represents an English constituency. It does not stop there, because every other Minister in the Northern Ireland Office represents an English constituency.

In his opening speech the Secretary of State for Scotland seemed to rule out devolved government for that country. He said that devolution was not an issue in the election. There must be a difference between Scotland and Northern Ireland, because proportional representation was never an issue in any general election in Northern Ireland. It was never mentioned by the Government of the day, but that did not stop the Westminster Government introducing such a radical measure in Northern Ireland. We have the farce that electors in Northern Ireland have two different voting systems. There is one system for the Westminster Parliament and a different one of proportional representation for local government, for a Stormont

Parliament if there is one, and for the European Community elections. If that is good enough for Northern Ireland, why has that voting system not been introduced to England, Scotland and Wales by previous Conservative Governments? It is high time that the Government dropped their hypocritical and patronising attitude to certain regions of the United Kingdom and ensured that we in Northern Ireland are not pushed apart from the rest of the nation.

The previous Conservative Government never raised the issue of the Anglo-Irish Agreement with the people of Northern Ireland. That was not done in any election. Instead, the agreement was forged behind the backs of the majority of people of Northern Ireland. It was forged with the Dublin Government and representatives of the Nationalist minority in Northern Ireland. The agreement amounts to a major constitutional change in part of the United Kingdom, yet it was brought into existence without any prior consultation with anyone representing the majority. The majority were excluded by the Government from the consultation that preceded the creation of the agreement.

Against that background, it is no use the Government saying that devolution was not raised in the recent general election in Scotland and Wales. I have supported devolution for those two regions in the past and I shall continue to do so in future. I fear that many hon. Members will feel alienated, as will those whom they represent, by the Government's patronising attitude. It seems that the Government believe that they know best and that they must decide, instead of the people, who are supposed to have the democratic right to express an opinion.

A great wrong was done to Northern Ireland by constitutional changes that were never put to the people of Northern Ireland. About 1 million people have been deliberately deprived of their fundamental democratic right of consultation. The Anglo-Irish Agreement is a bar to political progress and the sooner it is replaced the better it will be for Ulster and the entire United Kingdom.

The excuse for the London-Dublin accord was that, according to the Prime Minister, it would bring peace, stability and reconciliation. That was a shabby excuse for a shabby exercise. It was an admission of the failure of successive Westminster Governments to defeat the Provisional IRA. I have struggled throughout the years that I have been a Member of this place to bring about reconciliation in Northern Ireland and to achieve political progress. Neither I nor any of my hon. Friends who represent Northern Ireland constituencies has any control over the battle against terrorism, for that is solely a matter, regrettably, for the Government. Yet my parliamentary friends and I go through the agony, which no one else in the House experiences, or which very few do, of witnessing the slaughter of civilians, of members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment and of members of the regular Army. A murderous sectarian campaign continues unabated.

There was an attempt on Saturday by a Republican terrorist organisation to murder the wife and children of Jim Nicholson, a former Member representing Armagh and Newry. That was another horrific example of what the decent people of Ulster have to endure daily. The intended victim was Jim Nicholson, and it is fortunate that he and his family were not victims of the IRA. Only the week

before he had telephoned me from his home to congratulate me on my victory over a bogus Unionist who stood against me in my constituency.

We express thanks that the terrorists did not succeed on the occasion to which I have referred, but the threat of death hangs over everyone in Northern Ireland, day and night. That is something which those living in this part of the United Kingdom cannot understand or appreciate. That is why I do not have much confidence in the Government or in the statement in the Gracious Speech that the Government

"will work unremittingly for the defeat of terrorism."

We have heard it all before. I have heard it over many years as a Member of this place. I said shortly before the previous Parliament was dissolved that death and violence will continue in Northern Ireland despite the Government's boasts and expressions of determined action against the evil terrorists. They issue press statements, or statements are leaked from the Northern Ireland Office, and it is left to the poor soldiers and police to remain on the front line while Ministers are safely ensconced in their cantonment in Stormont castle.

I pay tribute—I cannot do this often enough—to the courage and gallantry of members of the Army and the police as well as to the civilians of Northern Ireland, who have shown the utmost restraint in the most difficult circumstances. Each fresh atrocity further divides the community in Northern Ireland, and the Anglo-Irish Agreement has contributed to that unfortunate division.

As a result of the persistent campaign by the Unionists' elected representatives, backed by a hurt and angry Ulster people, the Government now realise that they have made a blunder over the agreement, which has achieved very little in Northern Ireland. The Government now wish to get out of the present political impasse, but only—and this is the trouble—if they can do so without losing face, nationally or internationally.

As Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, I strove constantly and strenuously during that body's lifetime to bring the political parties together. I urged the SDLP to enter the Northern Ireland Assembly, because I thought that the climate was right for political progress. Sadly, the SDLP said no to my overtures, just as it said no to the Government who had introduced the initiative of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Had the Government had the courage to devolve powers to one or more of the scrutiny committees at Stormont, the Assembly would have been transformed into a vibrant body, representing and working for the entire community. However, when the SDLP boycotted the Assembly, the Government capitulated. When a minority representation said no to their initiative, the Government capitulated. Then they decided to scuttle the Assembly, even though it had been of benefit to the Ulster people, and even though that meant repudiating the Ulster Unionist majority.

None the less, I have never given up the hope of bringing both sections of the community in Northern Ireland together, and those who voted for me in the recent election share my ambition. Yet there are already mischief-makers about in Northern Ireland who are intent on blocking political progress for their own devious political purposes. They are accusing the Protestant clergy in Northern Ireland of preparing the way for a royalist sell out by encouraging talks between the constitutional political parties. Those negative people, who pose as politicians, are intent on labelling any Unionist who

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

engages in such talks as a traitor, but in truth it is those negative people who betray Ulster and the long-suffering people of Northern Ireland.

Let me make my position perfectly clear. I am for talks between the representatives of all the constitutional parties to find an acceptable alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I am for reconciliation; to me it is not a dirty word to be avoided in all political discussions. I believe that Protestants and Roman Catholics can live together in Northern Ireland and, indeed, I hold out the hand of friendship to all law-abiding people, irrespective of their religious or political affiliations. I am in favour of a devolved Parliament at Stormont, which would bring together all those who condemn violence and who wish to work together for the good of Ulster and its people.

What a challenge there is for the politicians of Northern Ireland, at least for those who shun violence and wish to bring peace and harmony, where at the moment we have hatred and division. That task must be undertaken, because we have to battle against unemployment, which is a scourge in Northern Ireland. We have to battle, too, against deteriorating health and hospital services and do something to stop the break up of industry in Northern Ireland. We need more jobs, and we need to encourage more firms to come and work in Northern Ireland. Above all, we must work to provide a future for the young people of Northern Ireland.

8.15 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): You have called me to speak at rather an apt time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been watching with interest this evening and counting the relative strengths of the Scottish Nationalist party and Plaid Cymru, on the one hand, and the Scottish Conservative contingent, on the other. As the debate has worn on, the relative strengths have to-ed and fro-ed. At the moment, with five hon. Members on our Benches and only two Scottish Conservative Members, we have the most satisfactory result of the evening so far.

I confess that I have been playing my game of spot the Scottish Tory for some time. Their number has been as low as one and as high as seven during this debate, but for most of the time there have been four Scottish Conservative Members in the Chamber. For some time, I thought that the Secretary of State for Scotland had laid down his particular 40 per cent. rule on his own contingent of hon. Members.

My first duty is to pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Albert McQuarrie, who was known in the House and elsewhere as a robust character. He came to the House late in life, but I know that he played a full part in its debates, and I am sure that all hon. Members will join me in wishing him a long and happy retirement.

Banff and Buchan, the constituency for which I now have parliamentary responsibility, is a constituency of robust characters, as one would expect from an area that depends for its livelihood on fishing, farming and oil and the industries related to them. My constituency has robust characters who work with their hands and get their faces dirty. They are involved in producing, making and catching things. They are people engaged in the manufacturing and primary sectors who are the real creators of wealth. If Government policy was orientated more to the primary and manufacturing sectors of

industry, rather than to the rentier economy produced by the Conservative party, the long-term health and welfare of this country would be better served.

I shall examine in turn the problems facing the three basic industries of my constituency—farming, fishing and oil. I notice that a good deal of attention was paid in the Gracious Speech to the problems of the inner cities, and I welcome Government initiatives on that serious problem. However, in Scotland we do not have a serious inner city problem. In our major cities we have problems on peripheral housing estates, but we have, too, an enduring and extremely serious problem in our rural communities. I do not think that the Government realise the extent to which the decline in farm income is causing such problems for the rural areas and I hope that they will turn more of their attention to that as the Session progresses.

Conservatives claim that theirs is the party that reduces business taxation. If that is so, I hope to hear soon that they intend to abandon their plans to levy additional taxation on the fishing industry in the form of light dues—the dues paid for navigational lights. At the moment, the Government propose to remove the traditional exemption from light dues from the fishing industry while retaining that exemption for the owners of yachts and pleasure boats. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) would be very relieved to hear that, but I think too that he would join Opposition Members in arguing strongly that we should not impose an additional tax on working fishermen while those who own pleasure boats and yachts remain exempt. Light dues, which relate to a public service concerned with public safety, should continue properly to be met from the public purse.

We have heard some interesting remarks from the Secretary of State for Scotland who, since the turn of this year, has ascribed all the problems of the Scottish economy to the decline of the oil industry in Scotland. That is a remarkable feat, given that Scotland has lost 180,000 manufacturing jobs since 1979.

If the Secretary of State thinks that the impact of the oil downturn has been so serious in Scotland—it has cost us 30,000 jobs—why was it that the Government argued so forcibly for, welcomed and encouraged the decline in oil prices, which has caused these grievous burdens for the Scottish economy? Since 1979, successive Chancellors have received from the Scottish oil industry in revenue terms and in 1987 prices the sum of £70,000 million—approximately £14,000 for every man, woman and child in Scotland. Those Chancellors have been very sure that that should not be Scotland's oil revenue, but, when it comes to a downturn in the industry, there has been no doubt that Scotland should have the job losses. For these three industries—farming, fishing and oil—I will argue at every opportunity in the Chamber, and I will argue for a stronger defence of their welfare.

I move on to the political position facing Scotland and the reaction of Scottish Members to the Gracious Speech. Without doubt the Gracious Speech is interesting not for what it contains about Scotland but for what it does not contain. There is no sign that the Government will make any concessions to Scotland following their massive defeat at the polls. That position was encapsulated by the Secretary of State who, in an interview on Scottish television last week, said that the Gracious Speech is the same as that which we would have had if the Conservative

party had won 72 Scottish seats instead of 10. That betrays the arrogance and contempt with which the Conservative party now proposes to treat the Scottish electorate. In its view, it does not matter what we in Scotland say or do, how we vote, how we think or how we learn from our experience of the policies under which we suffer. That position is not sustainable in the longer term. How long it is sustainable will depend on the level of opposition from Opposition Members.

A number of questions have been asked about the importance attached to self government by the Scottish electorate. If the election results do not provide a convincing answer to that question, I have here the results of an opinion poll commissioned during the election campaign. The Conservative party has an interesting and geographically split view of opinion polls. It believes in them in England when they show that it is winning, but it does not believe them in Scotland when they show that it is not winning.

I remember earlier this month when this opinion poll was released. I was sitting in a television studio with Mr. Michael Hirst, who did not believe the contents of the opinion poll. The results of the poll showed that the majority of Scottish Conservatives were about to lose their seats, although the Secretary of State for Scotland had said that such opinion polls were unreliable, that this could not happen and that the Conservative party in Scotland would increase its representation. In fact the poll has been proved correct in its analysis of how many Scottish Conservatives would lose their seats.

It also asked people how important they regarded the setting up of a Scottish assembly. No fewer than 62 per cent. thought that it was very important or quite important. Only 25 per cent. argued that it was not very important or not at all important.

We take opinion polls as we find them, but it is an incredible proposition from a party reduced to such a rump in Scotland, as a result not just of this but of a series of elections, to argue that it has the divine right to interpret the wishes of the Scottish electorate more than any other party, or particularly the party that won the Scottish election—the Labour party.

Like many new Members I am engaged in moving home, and as I was clearing out some of my files I came across some yellowing pages of newspaper cuttings from the period immediately before and after the general election of 1983 in Scotland. In them, a number of Scottish Members of Parliament were making the case that the rights of Scotland should be respected—a case with which I agree. They were called “Labour’s new dogs of war,” and they included the hon. Members for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall). They argued that, by their efforts, they could impose the will of the Scottish people on the House and that they would manage to extract for the Scottish people a measure of Scottish devolution. We are now four years on and the dogs of war not only have not bitten very hard but have lost their bark.

I scrutinised with some interest the speech made by the hon. Member for Cathcart on Thursday, in which he came up with the incredible proposition that the Conservative party has half a mandate in Scotland. His argument was that the Conservative party has a mandate over such sectors as the economy and United Kingdom matters, but

does not have a mandate over specifically Scottish Office issues such as education. It is an incredible argument that the Conservative party has the right to destroy the Scottish economy but does not have the right to destroy the Scottish education system. It is not a case of half a mandate. The Conservative party either has or has not a mandate in Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) has put the case for the rights of parties coming up from the people. The hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) has argued eloquently why the Conservative party has no mandate in Scotland. For the benefit of Tory Members, I shall repeat it. The Tory party does not have a mandate in Scotland because Scotland is a nation and as such has a right to determine its own political destiny.

I will repeatedly argue for independence for Scotland within the context of the EEC. I recognise that that is not the majority view in Scotland, although opinion poll evidence shows substantially more support for that position than for the position favoured by the Tory party—the status quo. Scottish people have the right to choose the amount of devolution or self government that they want. Therefore, I am prepared to argue that, because the Labour party won the election in Scotland, it has the right to insist on its plans for the Scottish people being put into effect.

The basic question is: how will the Conservative party be made to do this? The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), in his quick-fire speech, was long on description of the condition of Scotland, but short on what he and his colleagues are going to do about it. The most with which he threatened the Conservative party was a few late nights for the reduced band of Scottish Conservatives. Incidentally, I am told that in Labour party circles at the moment the hon. Member for Garscadden is considered as something of a radical. If he is a radical, I wonder how conservative the rest are. I do not know what he does to Tory Members, but if I were in their position he would not frighten me.

The same applies to the eloquent address of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway). He cannot convince the Conservative party, Scottish Conservative Members or the Secretary of State for Scotland, by argument or appeal, to change their position. The Scottish Conservatives are a lost cause. They have lost their ability to argue their case before their fellow countrymen and women.

I find remarks about the largesse of the London Treasury to areas such as Scotland, Wales and the north of England amazing, as Scotland has an annual surplus of revenue over expenditure of £3.5 billion. I cannot, therefore, take seriously the idea that Scotland is subsidised by the London Exchequer.

I hear other remarks about the history and geography of Scotland which make me realise why so much of the Gracious Speech is devoted to the English education system. I suspect, however, that, in looking at the state education system in England, English Conservatives are looking at the wrong sector for additional education on economics, history and geography. I seriously suggest to Conservative Members representing English constituencies that the nations of Scotland and England have a close and long history. Sometimes it has been a troubled history but it has always been a close one. At this juncture in our affairs, when there is a dramatic political divergence

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

between Scotland and England, and indeed between England and Wales, would it really hurt them so much to concede a little justice to the Scottish nation?

8.30 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Sir William van Straubenzee represented the Wokingham constituency for almost 28 years, and during that time he showed himself to be a tireless correspondent and letter writer, a doughty debater and an elegant and witty speaker. In representing all of the people of Wokingham, I shall do well if I live up to his high standards as a parliamentarian and a fine constituency Member of Parliament. During his career he served in the Department of Education and Science and in the Northern Ireland Office, and in later years in the House he intervened frequently on education matters when his wisdom and knowledge were highly prized. Recently he gained the affectionate nickname of "The Bishop" for his role in trying to sell the mysterious ways of the Church to those here on earth gracing these Benches. It is with great affection that I step into his shoes, with the hope that I can live up to his high standards.

The constituency that Bill van Straubenzee won in 1959 was a very different place from the one that I have inherited. Geographically it was much broader, and in tone and style much more rural. So much so, as the new Member in 1959, one of Bill's first and most important tasks was to go and meet the local farmers. He equipped himself with a strong stick, and with not a little apprehension, because he knew nothing whatsoever of farming. He went to the occasion and confined himself to nodding wisely, making a few encouraging noises and from time to time tapping his stick. He subsequently learnt that this had been a great triumph—the farmers said to each other, "Well, you know, our new Member doesn't say much, but he can certainly recognise a good cow when he sees one." That is a skill that I need much less.

The Wokingham constituency now comprises the three large and important settlements of Wokingham town, Woodley and Earley, where recently has been constructed one of the largest new private housing developments anywhere in Europe. To the north of those three big settlements lie the delightful villages of Twyford, Ruscombe, the Remenham, Wargrave, Sonning and some of the other smaller settlements. To the south lie the villages of Winnersh and northern Crowthorne, the village I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay).

The main problem we face is the tremendous success of the enterprise economy in the Thames valley. The pace of growth and development has been such that it begins to produce strains on roads, hospitals and education facilities. I should like to say how much I welcome the initiative to be launched by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to cut the waiting lists. I remind him that high growth areas of the country need that additional resource to take care of population growth as well as the advance in medical treatments, which we all welcome.

In the Wokingham constituency we also experience the problems that the area of the Thames valley to the east of Reading into London is now really a unified labour market where wages are high and where there are many attractive job offers available. Whereas places a little

further east than my constituency enjoy the benefits of London weighting or outer London allowances for housing and for the competitive forces in the labour market, Wokingham has no such luxury. I urge the Government to look carefully at the possibility not of introducing complete regional pay, but of re-examining the geographical confines of London weighting and outer London weighting and also the amounts involved because we have difficulties in recruiting people of the right skills. If we can find them in other parts of the country, we have problems in housing them because of the high cost of housing.

Above all, the success of embracing an enterprise culture and the success of the Government in lowering taxes and getting growth and prosperity running again in so many parts of the country is more than relevant to those hon. Members representing inner urban constituencies that still suffer dereliction or poverty. There is common ground between us, because many of us representing vast growing areas would dearly love to see some element of that growth passing instead to those inner city areas where there is already public infrastructure and the need for more jobs and development. Therefore, we particularly welcome the Government's concentration in the Queen's Speech on setting forth a series of bold measures to tackle the problem of inner city decay.

It cannot be right that there are people in council blocks, tower blocks or medium rise blocks without hope of an improvement in their housing conditions. It cannot be right that there are acres near the heart of Manchester, Newcastle or in some of the less advantaged London boroughs crying out for commercial or industrial development that, for some reason or another, has been blocked when opportunities have arisen to return prosperity to those once great city areas.

The Government are right to put forward two particular proposals. The first is to give tenants the right to choose different styles of housing and to set up tenants' co-operatives. That should improve the lot of those in inner city housing. It is also right that urban development corporations should take on the task of rebuilding and restructuring industry and commerce by facilitating the massive influx of private capital that those derelict areas so clearly need.

I hope that hon. Members believe in the United Kingdom and understand that the debate in the House is to try to better conditions in all towns, villages, regions and nations within the United Kingdom. I hope that hon. Members will accept that there are many of us on the Government side of the House who, with good will, say that we wish to see those areas of poverty and dereliction cleared and improved. We invite Labour Members to study the reasons why the south-east is so prosperous and why it has embraced the enterprise economy with such success. I hope that they will ask whether, together with some public money and a lot of private initiative, we can kindle exactly the same kind of success in those inner city areas where the prosperity has not yet reached.

8.37 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): One of the pleasures of the debate on the Loyal Address is to hear the maiden speeches. It is a great pleasure to follow the convention of congratulating the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) on his extremely impressive speech. I am certain that we shall hear much more from

him on similar lines. We have just heard an extremely elegant speech from the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood). His reputation preceded him to the House. We all know of him as one of the major thinkers of the Conservative party. I believe that he invented monetarism. I believe that he is a true believer and a high priest of the monetarism theory. Therefore, all of us expect that he will climb the greasy pole of politics in an effortless way, and we expect to see him quite soon in the Government. Whether it is from the Front Bench or from the Back Benches, the whole of the House will be extremely pleased to hear from him again at an early opportunity.

There were two sentences in the Gracious Speech that leapt up off the page. They were:

"In all these policies, my Government will have special regard to the needs of inner cities. Action will be taken to encourage investment and to increase enterprise and employment in those areas."

As one who has been talking about inner cities for years, to no avail, I am astonished. It is as though an entirely new Government have appeared, eager to undo and repair the ravages of a neglectful and damaging predecessor. But who has been running things for the past eight years? What have eight years of Conservative policy done for the inner cities? If the Government intend to do something, what has kept them? If they really believe all this, why did they not do it in the last two Parliaments, instead of doing the opposite?

Everyone knows that it is Conservative policies that have caused and exacerbated the decay of the inner cities, and that instead of investing in them the Government have drained £20,000 million in rate support grant out of the inner cities. Do the Government intend to reverse all that? Where is the evidence for that? So what have we now—a twinge of conscience, a change of heart, an admission that they got it wrong before? The Prime Minister announces in a grand manner that she is actually willing to visit some of the inner cities. She makes them sound like foreign countries, with herself as some latterday female Dr. Livingstone, an intrepid explorer venturing into the equivalent of unknown darkest Africa. One wonders whether she might travel by train for the first time in her premiership and perhaps even meet some ordinary people. The royal family has a much better record of visiting inner cities than she has.

Today's debate is about the divisions in our country—never have they been so acute—between Scotland, Wales and England, and between the north and the south. But it is not merely a geographical division—that would be too simple. It is a yawning gulf which the Government are widening by aiding the haves and clobbering the have-nots. It is a division between rich and poor, whether in north or south, and it often shows itself in the chasm between the inner cities, whether north or south, and the leafy suburbs, north or south. The starkest divisions of all are probably contained in one city—London—where ostentatious wealth is flaunted cheek by jowl with the worst poverty in the country. This is not always noticed by Members of Parliament, whose knowledge of London is sometimes mainly of Euston station, Heathrow airport, Buckingham palace, Whitehall and Westminster.

No area has been more grievously hit by the Government than the London borough of Newham, which has found itself on the wrong side of the divisions which have opened up and are tearing us apart. Newham

faces acute social, economic and environmental problems experienced by few in comfortable Britain. Government statisticians tell us that only one of the 365 local authority districts in England and Wales suffers worse urban deprivation than Newham. The Department of Education and Science, after taking account of the socio-economic background of pupils entering the schools—their ethnic origin, those from large families or from one-parent families, those taking free school meals, and so on—said that those children were the most socially deprived in all of the 96 local education authority areas in England.

There is a deepening housing crisis, with some 47,000 unfit dwellings and the fastest increase in homelessness in London. There is a high birth rate and a large projected increase in population, and a large increase in the number of elderly people, with the services that they require. We have a large and diverse ethnic minority population—the fourth highest percentage in England and Wales of residents of new Commonwealth origin, many of whose first language is not English and many with special needs. Newham also suffers from high unemployment—under 6,000 in 1969, but now, on any realistic assessment, about 20,000, or one in five of the male population. More than 70 per cent. of jobs are in declining industrial sectors, and currently only 1 per cent. are in sectors which in the Government's view offer most scope for the future.

Many of Newham's environmental problems arise from the 19th century, when the east end provided the location for London's undesirable industrial and domestic infrastructure—the noxious industries, the sewage works, gas works, power stations and docks, which are now no more. Around these were built tightly packed 19th century workers' housing and what are now very old school buildings, with an aging infrastructure of roads and sewers all in need of repair. I have seen all those problems, of an intensity experienced by few other parts of the country, get worse under the Conservatives, with absolutely no understanding or sympathy from Government.

Cuts in central Government rate support grant led to a cut of 5 per cent. in education expenditure last year. This meant a reduction of 122 teaching posts, that clothing grants were cut by 50 per cent. and that school meals charges were increased. Classroom equipment and materials are not being replaced, buildings are deteriorating rapidly and, inevitably, standards are suffering. Unless there is a change in Government policy, there will have to be even bigger reductions this year. How is that supposed to benefit or strengthen the nation? Further constraints on housing expenditure will lead merely to more decay, with consequent despair and vandalism. In such stress areas, there are great pressures on the borough's social services department. If Newham's already low expenditure in this area is cut back further, as it would have to be as a result of the Secretary of State's proposed expenditure level, the results are likely to be horrifying.

The Gracious Speech talks of "investment", "enterprise" and "employment" in the inner cities, but what is the Conservatives' record? While the Government's friends make millions overnight in the big bang City, a few miles away in Newham the number of people forced to eke out an existence on meagre supplementary benefit has doubled under the Conservatives, unemployment has more than trebled—up by more than 300 per cent.—and

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

more than a quarter of those unemployed have been unemployed for more than two years. That is the reality that belies the Government's rhetoric.

The intensity of Newham's worsening housing crisis is largely Government manufactured. In 1979, at constant prices, Newham's housing investment programme allocations was £43.1 million. The Conservatives then cut it each year, until in the current year it is only £16.8 million. During that period the accumulated cuts in resources for housing amounted to more than £150 million. Is it any wonder that there are 12,000 people on the housing waiting list and hundreds of homeless families in sordid bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Had the council been able to build at the average rate attained under the Labour Government, there would be an extra 2,000 houses.

The other side of the tragedy is that the resulting acute shortage of houses pushes up prices in the private sector. A council survey showed that, even without this year's 25 per cent. increase in housing prices, a two-bedroomed house cost on average more than £51,000, a three-bedroomed house more than £61,000 and anything larger than that more than £78,000. This means that residents would have to be earning more than £19,000 to buy a two-bedroomed house, more than £22,000 to buy a three-bedroomed house, and more than £28,000 for a four-bedroomed house. Only 3 per cent. of the borough's residents could afford to buy a three-bedroom house, so with no council houses and the private sector priced out of reach, people are set to stay on the waiting list for ever while the number of homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation goes up all the time. Yet we all know that it costs twice as much per annum to keep a family in bed-and-breakfast accommodation than to build a new council house.

There are thousands of unemployed people who could build council houses, so why on earth do the Government not overcome their dogmatic aversion to public housing and bring unmet needs and unused resources together in a great housebuilding and renovation drive? It would make economic sense and would be one of the quickest ways to tackle unemployment and improve life in the inner cities. But where are the signs that the Government are willing to do that?

Nothing will ever be right in these areas until something is done about the chronic levels of mass unemployment and the abysmally low levels of income that it brings in its train. That is the heart of the matter. At Christmas I was touched to receive a card from the Broadwater Farm Youth Association, which I had visited with the Select Committee the previous year. During my visit I was introduced to many "youths", who were willing to be so-described and, indeed, still considered themselves as such at the age of 26 or 28 because they had never had a job, and one cannot mature and become adult without a job and the independent income that goes with it.

The Select Committee found clear evidence of racial disadvantage in the labour market. Black people are twice as likely to be unemployed as are white people and unless something positive is done we shall have a black underclass, completely alienated and shut out of our society. They will feel that they have been kicked in the teeth and we shall have to hope that they will not return the compliment.

Positive action must be taken. The simplest way is through contract compliance on equal opportunities by firms coming into the inner cities. I hope that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Minister of Trade and Industry, who I know has a positive outlook on racial matters, will pursue that policy or its equivalent. If his colleagues do not like the name, they can change it, but I hope that they will pursue a policy of that type.

One of the growth industries in the inner cities is crime. The Government have created the conditions in which it breeds. Common sense tells us that there is a connection between the growth of unemployment and the growth of crime, even if the connection is not automatic. One of the deterrents to criminal behaviour is what one may lose by being caught—the loss of one's job or perhaps of one's home—but what happens if a person has no job or is homeless? What happens if there seems to be nothing at all to lose, and no stake in society to jeopardise? Who can be surprised at the growth of crime in the festering, despairing conditions that have been created in recent years?

What do the Government propose to do? They describe as their showcase, and invite us all to admire it—the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) did that today—the London Docklands Development Corporation, but local people must be excused if they withhold their plaudits, for they have seen no benefits. Their interests have been ignored. Their needs are simple—jobs and houses for rent. They have had neither. The LDDC has acted as a Government estate agent, selling off land, including council land, to the first and highest bidder, with scant regard for local people. The astronomical prices for accommodation charged by private developers prices accommodation beyond the reach of locals.

As for jobs, a parliamentary reply to me on 27 January this year revealed that the 1981 census of employment, the year of the LDDC's inception, showed that there were 12,400 jobs in the docklands area of Newham. The LDDC's most recent survey shows that, in February 1985, the number of jobs in the same area was 9,746; in other words, a reduction of 2,654 jobs. As the LDDC is unelected and not responsible to local people, it increases their feeling of powerlessness. Local communities are regarded as nuisances to be displaced. Is that to be the pattern of the future?

The acid test is whether the Government are willing to work with local government as an equal and active partner, recognising that their elections and manifestos are as valid and have as much moral value as their own. Or is local government to be suppressed—as was the GLC—and unelected, unaccountable Thatcher placemen moved in to disfranchise local people and privatise public housing and public education, encouraging those who are able and willing to opt out of public provision, leaving just sink schools and welfare housing on the American model for what would then be second-class citizens? A genuine partnership between central and local government would be welcome. We all know that existing city action teams and task forces are largely cosmetic and have had little real effect. We need a thoroughgoing inner cities programme that is commensurate with the size of the problem—one that would work with local people and their elected representatives, not against them.

The Government should approach the inner cities with prudence and sensitivity. They should listen to Labour

Members of Parliament, as elected representatives. Are the Government capable of listening? Can they appreciate that a vote in Newham must have equal value to a vote in Finchley? The Government obtained 43 per cent. of the national poll. The Labour vote in Newham, North-East was 52 per cent. Of the 60 council seats in Newham, Labour has 59. The Government have absolutely no mandate to ride roughshod over local opinion that was so clearly expressed in inner city areas. We want a partnership to assist. But alien occupation and coercion from outside would surely mean the Government over-reaching themselves in the arrogance of power. Before the Prime Minister acts in such an autocratic and hubristic manner, she might reflect that President Reagan seemed to be all-powerful at the time of his election two years ago. Prime Minister Macmillan's Government seemed to be impregnable in 1959, and look what happened to them. If the Prime Minister over-reaches herself in that manner, the same will surely happen to her.

8.53 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I am happy to follow the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) and the remarks that he made at the beginning of his speech about the two maiden speakers who preceded him, even though I can follow him in nothing that he said afterwards. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) are different from other hon. Members whom they have followed in the debate, but they are none the worse for that. Both of them spoke in kind terms about their predecessors, both of whom will be much missed in the House, particularly Sir William van Straubenzee, who was a friend to many Conservative Members.

We come fresh from a general election that was dominated as never before by media coverage. It was described to me as being rather like the Olympic games coverage that is normally shown on television, with only one race at the end of the fortnight, and that was the 100 metres. Despite that, the electorate stayed firm throughout the proceedings, the debates and the hustings. I wonder why the media concentrated so much on the possibility of a hung Parliament when hardly any opinion poll in the whole of the three and a half weeks suggested that it would be.

The polls generally were extremely accurate, but some were highly questionable. I hope that the Government will look at the need to maintain standards among those who publish opinion polls. I invite them to ask the Market Research Society to propose the standards and then to legislate to make it an offence to publish polls that do not conform to them.

My constituents welcome the Government's concern for the inner cities. They ask the Government not to allow any indulgence in labels. Parts of Swindon, my constituency, has 30 per cent. male unemployment. Areas such as Pinehurst, in the central part of the town, has prostitution problems, and those who go in pursuit of prostitutes cause great harassment to the people who live there. The people in the central area were pleased to welcome the Home Secretary when he visited them. They hope for legislative action on the abuse to which I referred.

I commend to the House the national business rate, if only because it will help the businesses in my constituency which can look forward to the possibility of an 11 per cent.

reduction in the rates that they will pay—a saving of £3.5 million. I urge such companies to regard it not as a windfall but as the seedcorn for future expansion and job creation. We wish to see unemployment in Swindon go down beyond the 3 per cent. improvement that took place last year. Swindon will lose its competitive advantage. Therefore, there is a need for strong marketing of the town's natural attractions for industry. The work force must be made ready for employment opportunities.

I hope that in time industry in Swindon will welcome and help with the possibility of a city technical college and that a free hand will be given to the technical college to be out of the control of the local education authority. I hope that we shall see further moves to get all young people into training schemes when they leave school and that we shall make the dole no alternative to young people.

Already we have good links between companies and schools in Swindon. W. H. Smith has set a lead in the constituency in the link with Hreod Parkway school, and others must follow. This important start must be built upon.

The word "built" leads me to say that another aspect of the Queen's Speech which should be welcomed in the House is the move to create more private rented housing as an alternative to the Socialist council monopoly on rented housing that disfigures too many parts of the United Kingdom.

The debate has been about the divisions within the United Kingdom, but the major division now is between those in the private sector and those in the public domain. When one tries to explain the principle that one can spend only what one has earned, those in private enterprise understand because they have grown up in such a culture. It is much harder to explain it to those who are dependent upon the state. I know that because before I became a Member of the House I worked for the state in a nationalised industry. I recognise that, even today, after the Government have moved about a third of public industry back into the private sector, four out of the six largest employers in my constituency are still in the public sector.

Nowadays most strikes are in the public sector. We can carry on explaining the message to those people or we can speed up the rate at which we shrink the public sector. That is the way to get rid of the divisions that still exist in our society, and, in so doing, we shall get rid of one of the last remaining reasons for voting Socialist. That is the task to which the Government should set their hand. I hope that, at the end of that process, which may not come in this Parliament but which will undoubtedly come under Conservative Governments in the future because the Labour party is now unelectable, those of us who regard the United Kingdom with pride will not have to listen to the national anthem being booed at sporting fixtures in some parts of the United Kingdom.

I wholeheartedly support the proposals in the Queen's Speech.

8.59 pm

Miss Joan Lester (Eccles): The four years that I waited to get back into the House of Commons passed much more quickly than the five and a half hours during which I have been sitting here trying to speak in this debate. This is not a maiden speech, but it would be proper of me to observe the convention of a maiden speech since it is my first as Member of Parliament for Eccles.

[Miss Joan Lester]

My predecessor, Lewis Carter-Jones, represented Eccles from 1964 until this year. He never sought self-aggrandisement in any form. He was devoted to the constituency and to several causes, especially to the elderly disabled and handicapped. He also made a big contribution to debates on the aircraft industry. He was very well thought of in the constituency, and he will always take a great interest in what happens there.

For me, I suppose that I could simply say that I had 17 years of Mars bars and now I hope that I will have 17 years of Eccles cakes.

Eccles was a very different constituency when Lewis Carter-Jones first went there in 1964 from what it is today. Then it was a prosperous area with many traditional industries, very little unemployment and many opportunities in terms of apprenticeships and training for young people. That is not so today.

Unemployment is one of the big divisions in our society, and it brings many problems with it. It divides us in terms of health. It divides us in terms of opportunities for our children. It divides us in terms of housing. It divides us in terms of jobs for women. In my constituency, many women are engaged in part-time work where previously men, as the householders, were in full-time work. That is another big division between regions. The general prospect on the basis of the Gracious Speech is that those divisions will grow. Those who already live in the better-off regions will improve their lot and the lot of those who are excluded from those regions will get worse all the time.

Before the general election, my predecessor and one or two others had discussions with the Ministry of Defence about the outcome of the privatisation of the royal ordnance factories, especially the one at Patricroft. The Ministry made many soothing noises, on paper and verbally, to Lewis Carter-Jones and others to the effect that they had very little to worry about and that privatisation would make little difference to job prospects. Hardly was the election over than those of us who are concerned about the royal ordnance factory at Patricroft received notice of 250 redundancies to take effect almost immediately. When we visited the factory last week, they could hold out no prospect of an end to redundancies. The prospects of job opportunities in the area are extremely grim. I could reel off, but because of time I will not, the names of the factories that have had to close or restrict the number of people whom they employ in recent years, let alone since 1964.

I mention this especially because it ties up with what my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) said about compulsory job training for young people. Even if I agreed with it—I do not—there is no sense in talking about compulsory training for young people unless there is something to train them for. In my constituency, compulsory job training for young people aged 18 or under will simply mean giving them no alternative but to accept such training because there will be penalties if they do not—penalties on their families because of the withdrawal of benefit. However, they know that it is all a pretence.

Whose children will be the ones who will suffer under the compulsory training schemes? That is where the big divide comes. In the main, it will not be the children who are represented by those hon. Members from prosperous

areas who have already spoken. The children who will suffer will be those from areas such as mine and similar areas.

There is another division that has not been mentioned. Young people are divided into those who have money and the opportunity to go on to further and higher education—good luck to them—and all the benefits that that can bring, especially later in the employment market, and those who are unable to do so. They are being conditioned now, while they are at school, to go on to a youth training scheme. That robs them of all ambition because the schemes that are talked about and outlined in the Gracious Speech have no link whatever to any form of jobs in a constituency such as mine because there are no jobs and there will not be any jobs unless the Government are prepared to do something.

I note that the TUC has already withdrawn its support from the job training scheme because it describes it as "token training". The Government are not giving the Manpower Services Commission any resources to enable it to do its job properly. When the Government started the youth training scheme they were anxious to have the support and co-operation of the TUC and the trades unions. The Government should now listen to what they are saying because they are worried about the effect of compulsory training, or pseudo training, on young people.

While I was out of the House, especially during the past 18 months when I was the director of a trade union child care project which last year considered child abuse and this year is considering drugs, solvent abuse, alcohol addiction in young people and related matters, the thing that struck me more than anything else when talking to young people was the pervading feeling of cynicism among them and their parents about the training schemes. Society should be worried that young people aged 16, 17 or 18 are already cynical. Indeed, the attitude of some employers, even good employers, is one of cynicism. That also affects the lecturers and training officers because even if they are good—many of them are—they know that the job training scheme is a massive scheme that pretends to be something that it is not. The entire scheme is a shabby expedient to try to hide something unpleasant—youth unemployment—and it is one of the big divides in our society and one of the biggest dangers that we face.

If the Government and the MSC are serious about wanting to do something for young people, their first responsibility should be to plan for the future of the young people of 10, 15 or 20 years' time so that they may have a vision and prospects. If there is no vision and no hope, and if one feels that one does not have any prospects, one cannot identify with the society in which one lives. One would not feel that one owed society anything or had a responsibility to it. That is the danger of cynicism, but that is what we are teaching our young people today.

Massaging the unemployment figures and compelling young people to take up schemes will do little to lower their degree of cynicism about them unless there are proper prospects at the end of them. If firms continue to close in my constituency at the rate that they have closed during the past few years, the Government will be unable to kid young people that what they are offering them has any relation to their future role in society or to the jobs that they are likely to get in the future.

My big fear relates not simply to today's youngsters, who are on the schemes, about whom I have spoken. I fear that what is happening to them will rub off on the boys

and girls who are in our schools today, and who, in turn, will grow up with little hope, prospect or expectation. We should all deplore the lack of educational content of many of the youth training schemes. They pretend to be something that they are not.

The big divide between those who stay on at school and then go to further and higher education and the young people who are mostly represented by Labour Members and who are forced into pseudo training schemes is becoming one of the biggest concerns of our society. If the Government are serious about wanting to tackle such stress and differences, they will take that matter extremely seriously. We cannot afford to have thousands of young people, already cynical at the age of 16, without hope and retired from society before they have even had a chance to develop their full potential which I and many others always believe to be the goal of education and training.

9.10 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): The debate has been about the economic and social divisions, popularly called the north-south divide. We heard a great deal of nonsense in the weeks preceding the election about this so-called divide. If there were a north-south divide, I would not be here and we would not have the same number of Conservative Members for the north-east before and after polling day. Nor would we have had speeches, such as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), which was excellent. He represents the heart of the north-west and eloquently drew attention not simply to the problems, but to the opportunities of the north.

If there is a perception of a north-south divide, it is the growing one in all parts not simply that the north has problems, but that the south increasingly has the right answers. Therefore, to those of us who want to see the north, particularly the north-east, become more like the south, sharing in the prosperity, opportunities and enterprise that have been created so successfully in the south, the Government's re-election is welcome. In no region are policies of enterprise, ownership and greater personal freedom more needed than in the north-east. New enterprise is vital. We have lost far too many jobs.

Ten years ago our region was dominated by the old heavy industries — not simply state industries, such as coal, steel, shipbuilding and rail engineering, but declining engineering and other industries dependent on grants. Only 10 years ago one third of all those in manufacturing employment in the north-east were employed in plants each employing more than 1,000 men. We were chronically short of small and medium-sized businesses which are vital to new job creation.

After eight years of this Government, some 6,000 new companies are registering for business every year in the north-east and there is a healthy surplus of those that survive each year. They will provide the new jobs of the future.

The first company I visited in Darlington after my election in 1983 was Kohlengaz, which makes coal and log-effect gas fires. At that time it employed 12 people and had a small factory on an industrial estate. I returned during this election campaign and found that the company now employs 72 people, has three factories and hopes to employ more than 100 people by the end of the year. The company has benefited from the privatisation of British Gas, lower business taxation, an expanding economy and the increased consumer spending that comes with it. The

expansion from 12 to 100 employees may seem small, but it is only in that way that new jobs will be created in the north-east.

Wider ownership is also vital to the north-east. Our region has had far too small a stake in its own future. We have had the lowest proportion of home ownership, the highest number of people working for state industries and the lowest proportion of self-employed people. Over the eight years, some 65,000 families in the north-east have bought their council homes. More than 100,000 people are now self-employed and one man in six in the north-east now owns shares.

Greater personal freedom is also important in the north-east. More than any other region we on Tyneside and Teeside have witnessed the blight of municipal, expensive Socialism. We need to free our people from that blight by cutting personal taxation, by reforming social security to eliminate the disincentives and by improving choice for all.

The Gracious Speech is important in its radicalism. The great achievement of the previous Parliament was to widen ownership — to give people who could afford to buy their homes, who could afford to buy shares and who could afford to buy private pensions, the opportunity to do so. The programme sketched out in the Gracious Speech is radical in a different sense. It deals directly with those who are, as yet, unable to buy their homes, unable to buy shares or to take out private health care or make private provision for their children's education. In this legislative programme my right hon. and hon. Friends have recognised that those who cannot afford to go private need not be denied the increased choice and higher standards that those who can afford to go private purchase with their money.

The Bills on housing, education and competitive tendering in local government will enfranchise those who have to rely on state schooling, public housing and local council services with a much greater choice than they have ever enjoyed before. I believe that that is absolutely right. Why should poor people without the financial ability to move into the catchment area of a more popular school be denied the same increases in the standards that other people can purchase? Why should they not be entitled to a greater variety of schools that will be competing for pupils and improving the choice that is available? Why should tenants in tower blocks or on unfashionable estates, who cannot afford to buy their homes and would be unable to sell them if they could afford to buy, be denied some stake in the ownership of their properties?

I am delighted that the measures proposed in the Gracious Speech, open enrolment for a greater variety of schooling, housing action trusts and more steps towards ownership for those not fully able to buy, will give those people much greater opportunity and thus much greater true power.

I hope that, at the of this Parliament, when those measures are on the statute book, they will be common ground, in the same way as our initial measures for extending ownership and allowing people to buy council houses and buy shares are now almost common ground across the Floor of the House. I hope that, by the end of this Parliament, the steps that we have taken to increase opportunity and choice for those as yet unable to make private provision will likewise be common ground between the two parties. If that is the case, no region will benefit more than the north-east where historically we have had

[Mr. Michael Fallon]

a lower proportion of ownership and made a much lower degree of provision for ourselves in matters such as private health and private education.

The Gracious Speech and the Bills outlined within it will liberate the north-east and end the monopolies in education, housing and town hall services that have so bedevilled its people.

9.18 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): One of my pleasant duties in winding up the debate this evening is to make reference to the many maiden speakers who have taken part in our debate.

Before I do so, may I say how welcome it was to see my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) in her place once again. In the inelegant language of the Whips' Office, she is known as a retread, but a more attractive retread there has never been. I am extremely glad to see my hon. Friend back. I echo the compliments and tributes that she paid to her predecessor, Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones, who was a particularly well liked Member.

It has been my experience in the House of Commons that each year the Members seem to get more intelligent than they were in the Parliament before—

Mr. Rifkind: Flattery will get the right hon. and learned Gentleman nowhere.

Mr. Smith: The Secretary of State may find that flattery is a useful device now and again. I have not noticed it in his repertoire, at least on the evidence of his speech today, but I can say genuinely, even if it is flattery, that I very much enjoyed today's maiden speeches.

I shall refer to the Conservative maiden speeches first. The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine), the son of a former Labour Member, paid tribute to Ken Weetch, another much respected and much loved Member of the House, who represented that constituency, as the hon. Gentleman said, with rare distinction for a very long time, keeping the beacon of the Labour party alive in an area of East Anglia where its support has not been traditionally strong. The hon. Gentleman made a polished and capable contribution. I am sure that in future debates he will be able to draw upon the expertise in housing that he demonstrated.

The hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), who succeeded Sir Edward Gardner, gave us an interesting survey of the industrial potential of his constituency. We appreciate the great importance of enterprises such as British Aerospace that are located in his constituency.

The hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce), who has a Scottish name, disclosed that he was born in Wales of an Irish mother. Despite that, he made an interesting contribution. He made what I regard as a controversial remark, to which I shall refer, but that is not a fatal defect in a maiden speech. I am not sure that he understood how controversial it was, but we enjoyed his contribution, as we did that of the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), who succeeded Sir William van Straubenzee. He told a story about Sir William. While it was amusing, it brought to my mind the story that Sir William often told about arriving in the House of Commons to be met by a Tory Whip who pronounced his name incorrectly. He corrected the Tory Whip and said that the name Straubenzee rhymed with MacKenzie. He was then sent

off to the Scottish Grand Committee. There was more aptness to my recollection than I thought at the time, because that may be the fate of several Conservative Members who cross the path of the Patronage Secretary in ways of which he disapproves.

We also had a contribution from the newly elected hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), whose reputation comes before him. Those of us from Scottish constituencies have had the pleasure of exchanging views with him on the hustings. He made an effective contribution, which shows that he will be a prominent performer in our debates in future.

There were some important and significant speeches by my hon. Friends on the Labour Benches, first from my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), who succeeded her father in the constituency. Ernie Armstrong was a popular and well-respected Member of the House. I have had the pleasure of knowing the hon. Lady for some time and I knew that she would make an effective contribution in the House. We now have the pleasure of seeing in the House the able daughter of a very distinguished father.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) had considerable parliamentary experience as the Member of the European Parliament for South Wales, which included the constituency that he now represents in the House. In his speech he displayed a sound understanding of the economic and social problems of the area. I am sure that his speech has marked him out as someone of quality who will contribute effectively to our debates.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) is a fellow countryman of mine and I have had the pleasure of knowing him for many years. He paid a gracious tribute to his predecessor, Roy Jenkins, in one of the more stylish maiden speeches that I have had the pleasure of listening to since I came to the House of Commons. He brings great experience of the Third world to the House of Commons, but on this occasion he chose to talk about the problems in his own constituency. He talked particularly movingly about those who contribute to the workings of our National Health Service. We look forward to the contributions that he will make on future occasions on other subjects about which he is equally expert.

The debate then moved on to an interesting passage in which there seemed to be a series of ex-Tory Ministers all telling us how difficult the poll tax would be, how it had not been thought through carefully and how many problems were associated with it. I have just been checking the Division lists, and every one of them voted without the slightest problem for the Scottish poll tax, including the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). He was not only opposed to the poll tax, but told us that he had consistently advised the Conservative party, in Cabinet and in shadow Cabinet, how dreadful a device it would be. I thought that, to appear sincere, he might at least have left the Government by the time the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc (Scotland) Bill was given its Second Reading.

We have heard much about whether hon. Members speak for the whole of Great Britain or for different parts of it. Many hon. Members cheerfully voted for a Scottish provision about which they would have been much more careful if it had affected their own constituencies. That will

be borne in mind in the inevitable debates that we shall have about the future constitutional government of this country.

I return to the hon. Member for Dorset, South who, in his maiden speech, made a remark that particularly caught my attention. He said that he thought that the division between the north and south of the country existed only in people's minds. Clearly there are complications in the north-south division. There are archipelagos of deprivation in the south, and those of my hon. Friends who represent London's inner city constituencies can testify eloquently to that, as, indeed, can my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), who did so in his contribution. Of course, there are some enclaves of prosperity in the north, too; but to pretend, as I believe the hon. Member for Dorset, South did—as the Prime Minister certainly often does—that there is no north-south divide is to create the impression that the person who makes the remark lives in a different country from the rest of us.

I find it astonishing that one has to take time out in these arguments—from reading the Queen's Speech it is clear that one must—to demonstrate that there is a deep division between the north and the south. Do not Conservative Members comprehend that 94 per cent. of all jobs lost since 1979, in the worst period of unemployment that we have endured this century, were lost in the part of Britain to the north and west of the line between the Wash and the Severn? Is it not appreciated that the precipitous decline in manufacturing industry—I hope that it is appreciated, and I am trying to make sure that it is understood by the Minister and others—has wrought particular havoc on the manufacturing regions of this country?

The matter should not be settled by statistics. Those with eyes to see can go to Victoria coach station and see people making that long distance journey from jobs in the south to homes and communities in the north. Those who, unlike the Prime Minister, travel around Britain by train and enter the backs of our cities will see the piles of rubble, the factories with the empty broken windows and the cleared sites where once families and communities earned a decent living and contributed to the wealth and prosperity of the country.

Those who have eyes to see can see in this country all too clearly that there is a deep and anxious division between the nations and regions that have suffered under this Administration and those that have prospered. I do not believe that that division is inevitable or God-given: it is man-made. The accentuation and deepening of the division since 1979 results from a series of economic, social and political choices for which the Conservative Government are responsible. In particular, the abandonment of regional industrial assistance as a concept and tool of Government coincides almost exactly with the precipitous decline in employment opportunity and in manufacturing output.

Simple statistics, however, are useful. In 1978-79, the last year of the Labour Government, £800 million was spent on regional grants. By last year, it was down to £400 million to £500 million. There was a slight blip, not unexpected in the year before an election, when it moved up.

I am afraid that the prospects are much worse. Last year we spent £512 million on regional development grants. That is down to £211.1 million in the expenditure

planned for next year, a fall of £300 million. In England, it will fall from £253 million to £108 million, a cut in one year of £145 million in the regions of England. In Wales it will go down from £88.9 million to £33.6 million, a cut of £55 million in one year. In Scotland it will go down from £170 million to £69 million, a cut in one year of over £100 million.

I added the cuts and found that the regions and nations of Britain have lost £2,000 million since 1979. That is the difference between the actual level of regional industrial assistance and that which would have been carried forward, even at the same levels of expenditure from 1979 onwards. As we know from the public expenditure rolling programme, cuts are projected up to 1990 and by then we will have lost £3,500 million. It beggars belief that we can take £3.5 billion out of the nations and regions of Britain and expect no economic consequences to flow therefrom.

For some curious reason, the Conservative party dislikes public expenditure. Clearly it is in favour of private expenditure, but when public spending is introduced it takes on an entirely different connotation. I think I speak for the vast majority of people and certainly for the Opposition when I say that we want expenditure in our constituencies. We do not care too much whether it is public or private, and it will be all the better if we can get an intelligent combination of both, with public sector expenditure leading in private sector expenditure. I think that the right hon. Member for Henley glimpsed that theory in his contribution to the debate. It is part of the responsibility of Government to make sure that the regions and nations of Britain that are in economic and social difficulties are given the maximum Government assistance in order to recover.

No doubt when he replies to the debate the Minister will tell us about various plans and schemes that are foreshadowed in the Gracious Speech. He will tell us about urban development corporations and, no doubt, about various extensions of the urban programme. On regional development grants alone, we are to lose £300 million in the coming year. I very much doubt if the Minister will be able to tell us that all his schemes laid end to end and multiplied by five will come anywhere near the £300 million that we will lose.

No doubt the Minister will deal with task forces and new urban development corporations and will list a whole panoply of new initiatives. A new one will be produced every fortnight, but they will all have small amounts of money, will all be centrally directed, and will have centralised appointees to run them. The local authorities, whose members are locally elected people, will be ignored in the various initiatives that the Government will produce. They will all be there, spatchcock schemes, surrounded and cocooned by public relations presentations, but all lacking the essential commitment of resources, which is the only way in which we can make a fundamental difference to the creation of employment.

Instead of entering into a partnership with the elected local authorities, as any intelligent Government would do, this Government will seek to undermine the local authorities by going behind them and appointing special corporations of various kinds. They will superimpose Government schemes, again with a strong emphasis on centralised control and appointment. The Government have abandoned responsibility for creating an economic and social policy that can unite the nation. The fault is probably an intellectual one, and it goes back to the 1983

[Mr. Smith]

White Paper on regional policy. In that White Paper the Government announced that they believed that the purpose of regional policy was social and not economic. I shall quote from paragraph 16 of Cmnd 9111, issued in 1983. It says:

"The Government believe that the case for continuing the policy is now principally a social one with the aim of reducing, on a stable long term basis, regional imbalances in employment opportunities."

Since 1983, the Government have not been very good at reducing regional imbalances in employment opportunities, because they have got steadily worse in every year since. However, that is not the main point that I wish to make. To approach regional policy from the point of view that it is a social palliative is entirely the wrong attitude.

Our concept of regional policy is that its purpose is to create economic opportunity, not to operate as a social palliative. It is to use the resources of the people and the institutions and industries of the regions and the nations of Britain to help the whole country to recover and to restore our economic wealth and prosperity. That is a far better concept of regional policy and would mean that the Government would enter into partnership with the public and private sectors, the areas and their elected representatives to ensure that we achieve success in the country.

That is what a Government with any imagination would do. Such a Government would set up the development agencies in the English regions along the lines of the Scottish Development Agency. Such agencies make sense for Scotland and Wales and are tolerated by a Conservative Government. However, they are denied to the north-east, the north-west, Yorkshire and Humberside. Even in terms of the Government's practices and philosophies, what conceivable sense is there to deny such agencies to the regions? The Secretary of State for Scotland boasted about the Scottish Development Agency this afternoon. Perhaps the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will tell us why he does not listen to the Secretary of State for Scotland and establish development agencies in the English regions.

The English regions, Scotland and Wales are crying out for developments with new technology and for special training initiatives to give opportunities to the many young people denied opportunity on a grand scale. We want a Government who intervene on purpose, actively, directly, intelligently and shrewdly in partnership with others to create that difference which the country so desperately needs.

Of course the Government will blame others for what has gone wrong. They will not accept any responsibility. I believe that increasingly the country is understanding the issue. People who live in the south understand that it is a problem for them as well as for the people who live in the north, in Scotland and in Wales. If we continue in the present way, the southern economy will be constantly overheated. Excessive inflation will be engendered as a result, and the Government are supposed to be concerned about that. There will be great problems in filling the public services. The odd situation exists whereby we have difficulty in filling those services when there are so many unemployed. There will be assaults on the environment, and people in the south often complain about that. I do not know why we continue to encourage industrial

development in areas where people do not want it when other areas are desperate for it and when it could be managed more sensibly and consistently and with a feeling for the environment.

There is also a terrible problem with house prices. When I recently looked up the figures I discovered that the average price for a semi-detached house in London is £76,230. The price for a similar house in Yorkshire is £26,320. There is a difference of £50,000 in the price of the house that the average person is likely to buy. No wonder problems are acute in this country.

We used to hear a lot from the Conservative party about the immobility of labour caused by council house policy. We have not heard a cheep from them about the immobility of labour caused by the fact that people cannot move easily from the north to the south. When people follow the advice to "get on their bikes", it is not the bike that they get on but the long-distance coach because they cannot afford the rail fares. Many have to live in the south away from their families and communities and a great deal of what they earn is used to pay for accommodation and transport. Does it not make much more sense to bring the jobs to the people rather than to drive the people all around the nation like industrial gypsies in search of employment?

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East reminded us that there are more problems than simply the division between north and south. There are problems with the rich and the poor and problems of the inner cities which we will debate as the Gracious Speech debate continues. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East said that the Government seemed to have just discovered the problem of the inner cities. One would hardly have thought that this was a Government who had already had two terms in office and had been in power for eight years. They seem to have discovered suddenly that there is a problem in the inner cities.

The problem was drawn to the Government's attention in 1985 by the Church of England report "Faith in the City". It was derided before it was read as pure Marxism. What was Marxism in 1985 seems to be Government policy in 1987 and the matter is now on the agenda for Government action.

In his telling speech my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East reminded us that the north-south divide is overlain by other divisions. There are divisions between the rich and the poor and they create other divisions in society and accentuate and deepen the north-south divide.

It is the acceptance of responsibility that is clearly missing from the Gracious Speech. The view is held increasingly faintly in some parts of the Tory party that the party stands for one nation, but the evasion of responsibility, the destruction of opportunity and the toleration of separate development within one country betrays the Tory party's better traditions as well as failing our nation. As this Parliament proceeds, we on the Opposition Benches, especially those of us who have been returned with increased majorities that reflect the feeling of those whom we represent, will speak with force, determination and vigour. We shall fight for those whom the Government neglect.

9.40 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): It is not

unknown for me occasionally to agree on certain matters with the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). Occasionally, we agree on one or two political issues rather too often for our respective political good. On this occasion I agree with everything that he said about today's maiden speeches. I have to say [Interruption.] I left the Chamber shortly after the right hon. and learned Gentleman left his place, and I returned shortly after he did. I have heard as many maiden speeches as he has, including that of the most attractive retread whom we now have to get used to as the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor). It begins to date me in this place when I discover that I am listening to maiden speeches from Members whose fathers served with me. Both my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) and the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) made speeches of which their constituents as well as their parents will be proud. I look forward to hearing more from them.

I have worked or debated previously with some of those who have made their maiden speeches today. My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) was well known to me before he took his seat, and I am delighted to be able to congratulate him on his maiden speech. My maiden speech was replied to by Bill van Straubenzee from the Government Dispatch Box. I should like to repeat all the praise that has been given to Bill van Straubenzee, who was a good friend of mine in this place. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham will make a great mark on the House and achieve the success that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) was good enough to say was likely to be his.

As I have campaigned in Scotland, I have faced the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). There are some who say that I have probably contributed to his success. When I listened to the hon. Gentleman's maiden speech, I was not surprised by his polish and professionalism. It is obvious that he will make a contribution to the party that he represents. At least there is a consistency in the views of the hon. Gentleman and of the Scottish Nationalist party towards England and this Parliament. That cannot be said about the views that are expressed by Scottish Labour Members. They seem now to be extremely keen on devolution and assemblies. That can be said even of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). The hon. Gentleman came nearer than anyone else who has spoken from the Labour Front Bench that I can remember to conceding that Scottish Members, in his vision of things, might give up their involvement in English education, English housing and other domestic matters here. That smacks of opportunism when it comes from a Scottish Labour MP.

Scottish Labour Members are wrong if they believe that their position in Scotland is matched in England. They try [Interruption.] I know that a quarter of the Labour party is assembled in the Chamber in the form of the Scottish Labour party. The Labour party should realise that its problem lies in England. That is what contributes to the distress of Labour Members, especially Scottish Labour Members.

Several hon. Members have tried to say that the political problems that have occurred in Scotland have occurred also in England. The north-south divide has been referred to occasionally, and wrongly, in political terms as well as in economic and other terms. The position is not

the same in England. We gained a seat in Stockton. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) confirmed by his presence that the Conservative party held Darlington. We held constituencies that we won in 1983 in the north of England. We held both seats in Bury, and both in Bolton. We held Hyndburn. We held seats in Nottingham. We represent inner-city constituencies in London and Leeds.

The Conservative party is reasonably strong in the north of England and Scottish Labour Members are distressed because their party has been virtually wiped out south of the Trent. They know that there is not the slightest prospect of a Labour Government ever being returned to the House with an overall majority as long as the Labour party loses every seat in the midlands and in the south of England south of the Trent, except for a few London constituencies. It even lost Thurrock and Walthamstow. That is the extent of Labour's advances in the south. The idea that there is some argument about where the mandate lies in different parts of the country seems irrelevant. It is simply a way in which Scottish Labour Members console themselves for the wounds inflicted upon them by the failure of their English colleagues.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): We are pleased to hear that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is widely travelled and has been to Scotland. Will he explain why, following his visit to Scotland, Conservative party representation there dropped from 21 Members to 10?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) explained clearly some of the problems in Scotland. Those problems will have to be overcome if the Scottish economy is to sustain the recovery that it is now achieving. An English visitor to Scottish platforms can have no doubt that the terms in which the economic and political debate is conducted in Scotland are still some years behind those that pertain in England. The realisation that it is by stimulating the wealth-creating process in the economy, by encouraging an enterprise economy, by increasing the efficiency of industry and winning markets for goods and services that economic success has been achieved in large parts of the country north and south of the border is not so readily appreciated in parts of Scotland as it is in the south.

I agree with my right hon. Friends the Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and for Guildford (Mr. Howell) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham — let alone my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in the midlands, the north and Scotland — who did not deny that there are patches of the country that are not sharing in the general and increasing prosperity. Those patches are not universally to be found in the north of England or in Scotland. We have come through a period of considerable economic change, which has brought success most quickly to those parts of the country that have attracted modern high tech industries that are based on service industries. That success has come, too, to areas that are most rapidly attracting new smaller business and have expanding medium-sized businesses. The process of change has been most painful in those parts of the country with the heaviest concentration of older, heavy industry. They have gone through a drastic and sometimes heartbreaking process of change from which they now have to recover.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham in his analysis. We have a national economy

[Mr. Clarke]

that is plainly thriving, with rapid economic growth, stable and low inflation and falling unemployment across the country. We now have to concentrate on ensuring that the success that we can achieve by reviving the wealth-creating process and encouraging and stimulating the enterprise economy is extended to the depressed towns in parts of the north and Scotland and to the inner-city areas, which run the risk of being excluded from economic advance if we are not careful. None of this is new, and none of the problems were being solved when the Labour party was in office. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East put forward a rather ludicrous view of the north-south divide and the jobs lost. He relied on figures that define the north of England as including Cheltenham and Northampton. He also used a most curious definition of the proportion of jobs lost. When he turned from why he thought that large parts of the country had unacceptably high unemployment to how it might be tackled, he went back to regional policy and regional development grant and the activities of his Government in the late 1970s.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman, who has the reputation of being one of the more thoughtful members of the Labour party, said that all he wanted for Scotland was public or private expenditure—he did not mind which—to cure the problems. In the late 1970s I was on the Opposition Front Bench and shadowed regional policy. I observed the expenditure of huge sums of money which he described so lovingly on regional development grant in the late 1970s. The Government were pouring money into regional development grant because unemployment was rising and the first of the processes of change from which we are suffering was beginning. It was ineffective because it was indiscriminate. Most of it was going to the oil industry in Scotland, when the oil industry would have invested in eastern Scotland anyway. It went to capital investment that was costing jobs because it was capital-intensive and enabled firms to shed labour.

I welcome the changes that we have made to regional policy since that time. Along with others, I pressed for it in the late 1970s. We were right to look at the map of assisted areas and concentrate on those with the greatest need, to concentrate regional assistance on the cost per job created, to look for the labour-intensive industries instead of the capital-intensive industries and to extend regional assistance to cover service as well as manufacturing industries. There is a lack of balance between service and manufacturing industries in parts of the north and in Scotland, which has been part of their problem.

Those are all improvements. It shows how bankrupt of original ideas the Labour party is north and south of the border that its principal spokesman merely cites that the Labour Government spent hundreds of millions of pounds on regional policy at the end of their period in office and implies that such differences of economic activity that now survive can be solved by expenditure. That means any expenditure, such as going back to the hundreds of millions of pounds for regional grant spent in a way that even trade union research groups now attack as having destroyed as many jobs as it created.

We have made our regional assistance more selective, and we should look at ways of doing so, so that we can concentrate on factors that stimulate lasting jobs and a modern economy, rather than just subsidising capital investment for its own sake. We must look at how we can

use the English Industrial Estates Corporation to make a contribution in the assisted areas and in urban regeneration.

It is not only that when talking about these matters the Labour party looks back to all or any expenditure and rejects the changes since. Other new ideas have been coming from our side of the House on urban regeneration and regional policy, for the last several years, and not as a new thing, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-East and others have suggested. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley started the precursor of what are now urban development corporations and set up the first task force on Merseyside.

London docklands is one of the most spectacular examples of urban regeneration that can be found anywhere in western Europe. It is pathetic that Members can still be found to get up and attack the achievement in docklands. I have seen, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-East has seen, the dereliction before and the development that is now going on. It is wrong for the hon. Gentleman to attack the number of jobs created by using figures that he knows are out of date, because he was talking about the number of jobs created up till 1985.

Urban regeneration grant and the use of urban development grant do what the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said we should do—use public sector investment to lever private sector investment into building new commercial developments in the cities. That we have done. Those are instruments of policy introduced by this Government that were not there when the previous Government were in power.

We must tackle not only the need to clear derelict land, on which we have doubled expenditure, and the need to develop new buildings and attract private sector investment into new commercial developments on the cleared land, but the problems of the people who live in inner cities and the depressed towns, where industrial change has hit them hard. That we have been doing.

The Manpower Services Commission's various training schemes were again derided by Labour Members. After the election, several of them went through the recitative of seeking to dismiss YTS, job training schemes and other things as though they had some alternative. I do not know what their alternative was. The hon. Member for Eccles referred to her cynicism and that of her constituents about those training schemes, without suggesting what should be put in their place.

In the last 18 months the Government have been encouraging and working with the Manpower Services Commission to make those training schemes more suitable for the residents of the inner cities and to give people in the inner cities more access to the good quality employer-led training schemes that we are now introducing. That should happen to job training schemes as well. Through the MSC we have been encouraging the growth of self-employment. Self-employment has been growing most rapidly in parts of the north of England, not just in the south. The biggest increase has been in Yorkshire and Humberside. [Laughter.] The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) laughs at the idea of more people being self-employed because they will not then belong to trade unions and thus maintain his political base in Scotland. Therefore, he disapproves of that kind of employment growing in a modern economy.

It is true of the other inner city initiatives that we have tried to concentrate the combined effect of our policies on

people who live in the inner city areas to give them the motivation and the skill that they need to take part in a modern enterprise economy.

Mr. Win Griffiths *rose*

Mr. Clarke: The task forces that we have created have been successful and we are extending them.

Mr. Griffiths: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clarke: No, I will not.

Again, the task forces have been criticised by people who have not taken the trouble to find out what they are doing in the eight inner city areas in which we have established them. First, they are helping to get better value for the huge amounts of money spent in those inner city areas for the residents of those inner city areas.

Mr. Griffiths *rose*

Mr. Clarke: They have experimented in new ways of increasing the skill and motivation of people who live there; attaching training schemes to urban regeneration schemes so that local labour can be trained and employed in the rebuilding of their own area; training people for new jobs that are created in commercial developments near inner city areas and avoiding the danger that those commercial developments might not provide employment for those who live in the most deprived parts of the cities; and working without the national organisations, such as Full Employ, which concentrate on training for ethnic minority youngsters in jobs of particular relevance.

Mr. Griffiths: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that it is a point of order.

Mr. Griffiths: I, too, hope that it is, Mr. Speaker. We have been listening to the right hon. and learned Member for 17 minutes. This is supposed to be a debate about the regions and nations of the United Kingdom. He has not yet mentioned Wales once.

Mr. Speaker: He has three minutes more in which to do it.

Mr. Clarke: I am delighted to mention Wales.

Mr. Griffiths *rose*

Mr. Clarke: No, I shall not give way on an intervention. The hon. Gentleman is trying to prevent my mentioning Wales.

Mr. Griffiths *rose*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member will sit down.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman asked a question about Wales and will not listen to the answer. Since March 1986 unemployment has fallen more rapidly in Wales than in any other region of the United Kingdom. The figures show that in 13 consecutive months unemployment has been falling. Over the past 12 months unemployment has fallen more rapidly than at any other time in a decade. Unemployment has been falling more rapidly in Wales, in the north-west and in the Midlands as a result of a combination of the policies that I have described. Those policies are aimed at building on the back of a substantial revival in the national economy and paying particular attention to ways in which we can stimulate the wealth-creating and economic processes of the regions of the country and of the inner cities as well. It is a combination of those policies that we need to pursue, together with the policies on education and housing that are needed more in our inner cities and in our depressed towns than in the rest of the country.

Our priority in our third term of office will be, having revived the national economy, to ensure that the benefits of a property-owning democracy and an enterprise economy reach those parts of the country that they have not yet reached. The reaction of the Opposition is pure cynicism, pure defeatism and pure opposition to what we propose. Their own policies are to spend hundreds of millions of pounds in regional grant on any capital investment and give rate support grant to Left-wing local authorities to provide public sector employment in their cities. They are bankrupt of ideas both north and south of the border. They have been bombarded by initiatives and

*It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.
Debate to be resumed tomorrow.*

Shropshire Health Authority

Motion made, and Question proposed. That this House do now adjourn. [Mr. Dorrell.]

10.1 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I am pleased that the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), is to reply to the debate, although I apologise for keeping her in the House when no Division is expected. I hope that by the time we reach the end of our deliberations I shall have even more reason to be grateful for her presence. I am equally delighted that my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) is in his place. I believe that, although his new-found freedom will ultimately be to the detriment of the Government and of my party, it will be of great benefit in the battles ahead to safeguard the Health Service in Shropshire.

The condition of the Health Service in the United Kingdom was a major issue in the election campaign nationally, but no more so than in Shropshire and in my own constituency. The true picture behind the Government's provision of resources for Shropshire and for the Health Service nationally was grossly distorted by representatives of highly irresponsible trade unions involved in the Health Service who frankly could not care a great deal about the level of health care in the county and were far more concerned to make party political points. The fact that they have been so quiet since polling day is clear evidence of their partisan point of view. They were aided and abetted by a politically motivated senior officer in the Health Service. So as not to brand everyone, I shall brand the individual—the director of personnel—who has made his position very clear and public through the local media. This has been much to the detriment of the health authority officers because the facts of Government expenditure on the Health Service in Shropshire were not made clear to the electorate and on one occasion were completely misunderstood by the Socialist candidate who unsuccessfully opposed me.

The facts of the matter are that in 1978-79 revenue expenditure in Shropshire was £29.1 million and capital expenditure was £1 million. In 1985-86—the last figures available, which were confirmed in a parliamentary written answer last Session—revenue expenditure had risen to £61.3 million and capital expenditure to £10.3 million. I can therefore assure my hon. Friend the Minister that we are not necessarily arguing about the level of funding. The problem in Shropshire, within the West Midlands regional health authority, is one of equity and future plans for the Health Service. While the Government's commitment to the Health Service has been very clear nationally, and in our region demonstrably so, by the time the money was apportioned by the regional health authority the allocation to Shropshire was down to two thirds. I believe that clearly shows that although the regional authority may have the interests of other health authorities close to its heart, the interests of Shropshire are clearly nowhere near the regional authority's heart.

My hon. Friend the Minister, as a former chairman of the Birmingham health authority, may have some interesting points to make in the debate.

The fact remains that Shropshire is a growing county. No doubt much of its growth is due to the growth of Telford new town. I congratulate the hon. Member for

The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) on his election to the House. Hon. Members who represent Shropshire, or many of the people of Shropshire, could have doubted whether there was a need for a new hospital in the east of the county. Some of us were concerned about the effect that such a new hospital would have on the established county service. Indeed, some of us were sceptical about the need for such a large second district general hospital when, by inner city standards, county population is not considerable.

Despite that, our area health authority in Shropshire was instructed by the regional health authority to cut £750,000 from its 1987-88 budget. That means that over three years, in addition to the cost improvements that are being undertaken—very effective cost improvements indeed—the authority must save an additional £5 million. That means a reduction of 7 per cent., and that has to be considered in the light of the fact that Shropshire is already 10 per cent. under its RAWP allocation.

I wonder why there should be such a problem. Part of the difficulty lies in the growth of the population of Shropshire—about 7 per cent. It is the fastest growing population in the west midlands region. To meet growing population needs and the growing demand for hospital and health services, the individual members of the medical staff of Shropshire health authority, to whom I pay credit, have not sought to make this a party political issue. I have referred to their union leaders. Members of the Shropshire medical service have been superb in responding to the demands placed upon the Health Service. In fact, clinical efficiency has increased by 4 per cent. Considering the fact that the growth development funds for our area health authority were 1 per cent. a year, one would have hoped that the growing demands of east Shropshire and the need for a new hospital on that side of the county could have been met by such development. However, the area health authority had to turn to the development fund for an increase of 1 per cent. a year to meet the need for supplementary pay awards, and the effect of the growth was halved. That left many of us in the west of the county of Shropshire asking, "What price Telford district general hospital?"

In 1984, following a meeting with medical staff in the county, I was so convinced of the answer to the question that I led a delegation of consultants to meet the then Minister for Health, the present Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He gave the area health authority an assurance that the building of the Telford district general hospital could go ahead on the basis that the region could meet the shortfall. That assurance was given to the Members of Parliament who represent the county, the medical staff in the county, the area health authority and, as we understood it, the region. Where has that assurance gone now? Long before the Telford district general hospital is anywhere up and running, we find that the effects that it will have on the rest of Shropshire are already beginning to bite. That was not the picture that was painted to us before the hospital was commissioned.

In fact, waiting lists are growing. We are among the six worst in the region. It is getting worse. The sadness is that, to try to meet the budget for the construction of Telford district general hospital, the area health authority has had to use the allocation that was announced by the former Secretary of State for Social Services to tackle waiting lists. That money has had to be used as bridging finance to save the existing Shrewsbury hospital services and allow the continuation of the Telford district general hospital.

Indeed, during the election campaign, my hon. Friend the Minister intervened to assure the residents of Shropshire that the casualty service operated by the Royal Shrewsbury hospital, based in my constituency, and the proposed Telford district general hospital, based in the constituency of the hon. Member for The Wrekin, would operate on alternate days.

So far removed are the people who make up the regional health authority geographically and practically from the health needs of our district of Shropshire that they can contemplate such a nonsensical idea in one of the largest geographical areas of the country without any reference to the medical staff. That is why I shall make it a continuing cause during my time as a Member of Parliament to seek the dramatic change, for which I called in the debate on Thursday, in the health structure of the country by the abolition of regional health authorities, which are little more than a time and money-consuming bureaucracy.

My hon. Friend the Minister may bring to the attention of the House the way in which day surgery can alleviate the growth of waiting lists. She expressed that concern during her visit to Shropshire. Our problem as laymen and as Back-Bench Members is that the method for the statistical evaluation of day surgery varies not only nationally but within the region, so it is difficult to judge how effective it can be. We must also take into account the fact that Shropshire is a large geographical area and cannot be compared with an inner city such as Birmingham, where hospital travelling times are considerably less than would be found in the constituencies of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill).

One of the main centres for day surgery in Shropshire was the Cross Houses hospital in Shrewsbury, which had to close to finance the building of Telford district general hospital. Far from the position getting brighter, we have many more problems ahead.

There is no doubt that the county of Shropshire has had more money from the Government in real terms, but the Members of Parliament who represent Shropshire say to my hon. Friend the Minister that the demands are greater. I speak not only in medical terms, because that is a problem facing the entire country, with the developments in medicine and the greater demands that people make on the Health Service. That is compounded by the growth of population in Shropshire, not all of it indigenous. If government policy is to create a new town in the county, there must be a moral obligation on the Government, regardless of their political persuasion—the new town has been sustained by government of both political persuasions—to ensure that the indigenous population of the county does not carry the burden exclusively for that accelerated growth.

Whether the complications in Shrewsbury that have arisen because of the building of Telford district general hospital have anything to do with the marginality of the political majority in that seat is a matter for speculation. I know what my view is.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): It is not marginal now.

Mr. Conway: It will be marginal yet again. Perhaps for short-term political gain, the rest of the county is paying an exceedingly high price—I believe too high a price.

The duty of the Government and of my right hon. and hon. Friends at the DHSS is to make the regional health authority move towards hitting its RAWP target and to honour the promises that were made to us that the construction of a second district general hospital in Shropshire would not annihilate the provision of cottage hospitals or the excellent reputation established in Oswestry and in Shrewsbury as centres of medical excellence.

That is the challenge that faces us, and my hon. Friend and her colleagues had better be prepared for a long-drawn-out battle, because, regardless of our political persuasion, we will not allow the Health Service in Shropshire to be hacked to pieces.

10.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) on his success in the ballot and on the efforts with which he puts the case for his constituents. I am also pleased to see in his place my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and my hon. Friends the Members for Fylde (Mr. Jack) and for Stroud (Mr. Knapman). It is nice to know that colleagues from other parts of the country take an interest in activities in Shropshire. I also see the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) in his place, and I am pleased that he is taking an interest in the welfare of his constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham has discussed this matter with my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, and he has written to my hon. Friend and tabled several parliamentary questions during the past few months. I take issue with his latter words. The Health Service in his neighbourhood is not being hacked to pieces or hacked into anything. In fact, it is steadily being improved, and the result of that is an improvement in the services that are available to my hon. Friend's constituents and to the neighbourhood at large.

I shall put the matter into context. I am sorry to disappoint my hon. Friend, but we have no plans whatever to abolish the West Midlands regional health authority. In fact, it is one of the most important in the country and its expenditure has increased from £433 million in 1978-79 to £974 million in 1985-86. That is a real terms increase of 19 per cent. over and above inflation. Since then there has been a further increase, and this year the West Midlands regional health authority will receive over £1.1 billion, which makes it, in cash terms, the largest region in the country. That brings the region within £25 million of its target share of resources, according to the RAWP allocation.

The total number of in-patients treated in the region has risen from 548,000 in 1979 to 666,000 in 1985—an increase of 21 per cent. Waiting lists are much shorter than those that we inherited in 1979. They have dropped from 89,000 in 1979 to 79,000 in 1986, which is a reduction of nearly 12 per cent. In addition, the West Midlands regional health authority will receive £2.88 million this year from the national waiting list fund, which will enable an extra 12,000 cases to be treated.

The capital programme in the west midlands is also the largest in the country. Nineteen major capital schemes have been completed since 1979, 15 are under construction, and a further 32 are approved to start. As my hon. Friend has said, those schemes include the new

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

development at Telford. The total capital allocation for 1987-88 in the west midlands is nearly £90 million—£88.8 million to be precise. In fact, the allocation to the west midlands has been the largest in the country for some years. Large sums of money are certainly being allocated to that region.

My hon. Friend mentioned funding for Shropshire district health authority. I can confirm the figures that he gave. In 1985-86, gross revenue expenditure was £61.3 million. Again, there has been a further increase since then. In 1987-88, the current year, the total amount of the initial cash allocation to that health authority is £65.6 million, which is an increase of more than 7 per cent. on the previous year. Pay awards and waiting list money are on top of that. Therefore, there has been a substantial increase in the amount of money going to that health authority—from £52 million in 1982-83, when it was founded, to £65 million now.

However, as my hon. Friend has said, hospital activity has also risen sharply in Shropshire over recent years. That is partly because of population growth, especially around Telford. I must admit that, as a former housing chairman in Birmingham, I accept a small modicum of responsibility for that. It was under our control that we offered the good burghers of the city of Birmingham the opportunity to live in the leafy lanes of Telford. Happily, many people have settled there. However, as my hon. Friend said, they expect the same quality of service as they received from the great teaching hospitals in Birmingham, and they have a right to expect that.

The increase in hospital activity in Shropshire has come also from the much improved service, and with that people's expectations of the treatment they can have has tended to rise. Between 1982 and 1985 the number of in-patients treated rose by 16.5 per cent. In 1985, nearly 52,000 in-patients were dealt with by the Shropshire health authority. A total of about £400,000 has been allocated to Shropshire for its waiting lists. Full details have not been finally agreed for all of that, but already about £125,000 is being spent this year. That will especially assist those patients being treated by the ear, nose and throat departments, as well as those in ophthalmology. We look forward to seeing the rest of that money being committed shortly.

We are aware that many people believe that the changes that are taking place in Shropshire are putting a strain on the district's current resources. I accept that my hon. Friend feels deeply about Shropshire being seriously under-funded. However, I hope that he accepts that that is taking place against the background of a rapid increase in resources to that neighbourhood. I accept his point that the question is not how much, but the way in which the money is used and allocated in the region.

I should underline the fact that the allocation to a district health authority is a matter for the regional health authority. Ministers and officials have no intention of starting to decide the allocations to more than 190 health authorities. The regional health authority takes into account a calculation which is based on the RAWP formula for district health authorities, but it is only a guideline. We have asked regional health authorities not to cause rapid fluctuations in the sums that go to the districts and to take into account local needs.

As a result of the growth in the demand for services and the rapid change in population, the west midlands region looked at the Shropshire health authority district and some years ago decided on a major investment in services in Shropshire in the shape of the new hospital at Telford. Many people in the east of Shropshire were looking to Wolverhampton for their hospital services. However, it was agreed that Telford should get the new hospital and a new £24 million unit, which I visited last year, is scheduled to open in 1989.

Before Telford stage one could go ahead, several major meetings were held in 1983 between my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), who was then the Minister for Health, local Members of Parliament, clinicians, regional and district health authority chairmen and others. A funding package for the Telford district general hospital was hammered out. Without that agreement Telford phase one would not have happened.

It was always accepted that the opening of the new general hospital would mean a review of existing services in Shropshire. Historically we have had a network of small community hospitals throughout the country providing a good service.

Mr. Conway: This is a crucial point and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene. We understand the point that she makes so ably. The problem in Shropshire is that cuts in hospital provision and the closure of hospitals, such as Cross Houses, which have been on the cards for many years—long before I became the Member of Parliament for Shrewsbury and Atcham—are happening before Telford is up and running. The assurance that was given by my right hon. and learned Friend, now the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was that that shortfall would be met by the regions so that we would not face those closures until after the new district general hospital was in operation. If that was the case, I doubt whether we would be having this debate.

Mrs. Currie: I shall come to that point in a moment, but I should like to develop my argument chronologically so that we can see what happened.

When Telford is opened, Shropshire will have two large district general hospitals—the other being the Royal Shrewsbury hospital—and many other units. We all accept that some change has been necessary. This also offers an excellent basis for planning the development of community services for the priority care groups. I suspect that at the heart of much of our discussion tonight is a pull between the acute services that people have a right to have and a need to develop the priority groups—the Cinderella services that are not spoken for. That is the opportunity that the health authority is attempting to develop.

From what we have seen—I have checked again today—to all intents and purposes the 1983 package has held together, but there has been some shift in responsibility, which I hope is along the lines that my hon. Friend would want. The region's contribution has increased from the originally agreed £2.1 million to £4.1 million. That has more than offset a reduction in the contribution from the Shropshire health authority from £6.4 million, which was agreed in 1983, to £5.6 million now. The result is that the total Telford package is now estimated at a shade under £12 million ready for the

opening of the new hospital. Within that figure the region has calculated that some £1.1 million of growth money will enable those community services to develop.

I take many points that my hon. Friend makes, but he will be aware that the community health council has a statutory role in this, as I have. If it objects to the proposed changes in the existing services, those proposals must come to Ministers, so I am a little cautious about commenting on any of the details about particular hospitals that he makes. If the proposals must come to us, we shall examine them carefully.

The regional health authority maintains that Shropshire has been treated no better and no worse than its other 21 district health authorities, some of which face similar problems of rapid population movements. During the past two years Shropshire has moved from that estimated RAWP target, but that has resulted from the increase in the population. From 1989 this position will be substantially reversed when the Telford district hospital comes on stream. Until that happens Shropshire must, in common with other districts, manage within its budget — everyone must do that. Shropshire should not be an exception in the way that my hon. Friend has suggested.

Assuming that Shropshire will make the savings that are looked for, the regional health authority acknowledges that it will have saved £2.2 million during the period 1984-85 to 1987-88, and that is £500,000 more than the regional health authority's target. However, the authority still believes that Shropshire can do more.

I should like to take issue with my hon. Friend about day cases. In Shropshire the figures for 1985, which are the latest that I have, show that the proportion of total discharges and deaths done as day cases — the proportion of total patients dealt with on a day-case basis — ranged from 12.8 per cent. in ophthalmology to 4.8 per cent. in general medicine. That makes Shropshire one of the worst counties in the country. In the case of general surgery it is one of the worst in the country with only 7.7 per cent. of all cases dealt with on a day-case basis compared with the bottom 10 per cent. nationally in those specialties of 9.8 per cent. The top 10 per cent. nationally in all those specialties are reaching between 25 and 34 per cent.

The neighbourhood that I represent is a large rural area and much of it is served by the Burton hospitals of Burton on Trent. Surgeons there tell me that they are achieving figures of about 40 per cent. of cases dealt with on a day-case basis. I honestly do not believe that Shropshire is that different from south Derbyshire. If such figures can be achieved in Staffordshire and south Derbyshire, I fail to see why more than 90 per cent. of the cases in Shropshire must be treated on an in-patient basis. Through my hon.

Friend, I again urge the magnificent staff who work in Shropshire to look again at the way that other people do it and to see whether some proposals can be put forward. I have checked again today and I have been told that Shropshire has no proposals for promoting day cases until the new district general hospital opens. I believe that the regional health authority has a point when it says that working in that way it spends money that might be reallocated in different ways.

I understand that Shropshire also undertakes a lot of expensive weekend work. It has a poor use of day care — it is the second worst district of the region. In 1984 in gynaecology waiting times were twice the national average. There are also long turnover intervals. That is why we developed performance indicators, and that is what they tell us.

Mr. Grocott: Is the Minister saying that, in her judgment and the Government's judgment, Shropshire already gets plenty of money for its health services and it is simply a case of the people who work in the Health Service in Shropshire being inefficient?

Mrs. Currie: On the contrary, I am sure that they are extremely efficient. I merely suggest that Shropshire might look at the way in which some similar districts function to see whether there is an opportunity for it to do things in such a way that it would ease some of its financial difficulties. It is for each clinician to decide how he or she will look after his or her patient. However, those figures are available for discussion, and I am sure it they will be taken in the spirit in which they are offered.

To some extent, the solutions lie within Shropshire district health authority's own control. That is why we appoint health authorities and that is what we expect them to do. To some extent, it also lies within the region's control. In answer to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Minister for Shrewsbury and Atcham, the region has agreed to advance Shropshire some £800,000 earmarked for the opening of Telford to enable rationalisation to proceed. It intends to relieve the pressure that my hon. Friend has identified. The result should mean no major loss of services as originally proposed in a closure package.

All the problems will be eased as the new hospital comes on stream, to which we are all looking forward shortly. It is not possible in a debate of this nature to respond to all the points that are made. However, I hope that I have addressed some of the key issues. I have no doubt that in the weeks and months ahead my hon. Friend will let me know about any outstanding points.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 30 June 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

Member Sworn

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath

William Jeremy Masfield Shelton, esquire, Streatham.

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Cancer Screening

1. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of cervical cancer screening machines in each of the English and Welsh district health authorities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): Cervical cancer screening requires only the simplest of equipment, which is readily available in all district health authorities.

Mr. Fatchett: Despite that comment by the junior Minister, is it not the case that, in most authorities, there is not an adequate system of call and recall for cervical cancer screening? The reality is that only one authority in five in England and Wales has that service. Is it not time for the Minister, instead of giving glib answers, to reassure men and women throughout the country that she is prepared to invest in a real service and to make the money available for a call and recall scheme for all women at risk?

Mrs. Currie: The call and recall system is not in itself a screening system, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman realises. I am also aware that in his own city, Leeds, progress is being made to introduce a full computerised call and recall system. The family practitioner committee is currently computerising its register as the first stage. Until then, a manual system is in operation for recall, which is achieving a commendable 99 per cent. response.

Dame Jill Knight: Has my hon. Friend any knowledge of when it may be possible to offer regular cancer cervical tests for all women who are calculated by the medical profession now to be at risk?

Mrs. Currie: It is possible now to offer regular testing, and we recommend that women between 20 and 65 should come in and be tested on a regular basis. The dispute is not about the screening system that is available now. It is about the computerised call and recall systems, and we expect that all health authorities will meet their target of next spring.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Minister realise that several hundred women in Liverpool have had to be recalled,

either for hospital treatment or for further tests, because of errors in analysis? What assurances can she give women throughout the country that tests of this kind are accurate? Does she have faith in the present system, or does she believe that these errors can be eliminated in some way or other?

Mrs. Currie: Yes. I, like many millions of women, have complete faith in the present system. The problems in Liverpool, as the hon. Lady knows, are the subject of an inquiry.

Mr. Conway: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the substantial progress that the Government have made in this area, but may I draw her attention to the length of time it has taken, particularly in the county of Shropshire, for people who undergo the examination to get the results of the tests? I have a letter from a constituent in the Bayston Hill area of Shrewsbury who has been waiting since January, and we are now in the last day of June. That is quite long enough to wait.

Mrs. Currie: It gives me no pleasure whatever to confirm that the waiting time in Shropshire is the worst in the country. I hope that my hon. Friend will add these remarks to those made during last night's Adjournment debate in his further discussions with the local health authority.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister tell us when the 56 health authorities that promised to bring in call and recall schemes by 30 March, but failed to do so, will do so?

Mrs. Currie: The advice that we have received, which we have confirmed once again this week, is that all health authorities expect to have their computerised call and recall systems up and running by next spring. I reiterate that if the hon. Gentleman wants to assist women who might at some stage suffer from cervical cancer he should encourage those who have never been tested to come in for a test. They do not have to wait until they get a computerised piece of paper. The test is available now.

Diabetics

2. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when free needles and syringes will be available to diabetics.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): Re-usable syringes and needles are already available on prescription. As I announced on 14 May, disposable syringes and needles will be available on prescription from 1 September. Since diabetics who need insulin are exempt from all prescription charges, they will be free for adults as well as for children.

Mr. Waller: I congratulate my hon. Friend on making available the resources to bring about an improvement which will be of considerable benefit to many diabetics. Is he satisfied that by September sufficient supplies of the disposable equivalent will be available and that satisfactory arrangements will be made for the safe disposal of used needles?

Mr. Newton: Yes. It is because I wished to be sure on those two points that the system is being introduced a little later than I had originally hoped, but we have made arrangements which I am confident will be satisfactory.

Ms. Richardson: Doubtless the Minister is aware that many thousands of carers now have to pay for syringes for

those loved ones for whom they care. The carers tend to be poor women who cannot afford to pay. Was it not a mean act by the Government to announce at one and the same time the increase in prescription charges and the availability, albeit later, of free syringes? Was not the availability of the free syringes put in as a sweetener, as it were, to disguise the increase in prescription charges?

Mr. Newton: I am a bit puzzled by what the hon. Lady says. Syringes and needles are already free on prescription, but they are re-usable syringes and needles. We are substituting free provision of the more convenient and comfortable disposable syringes and needles. The hon. Lady's approach is typical of the mean-minded, nit-picking that we have heard from the Opposition recently.

Pensions

3. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the value in real terms of the basic retirement pension to (a) a single person and (b) a married couple, as a proportion of average earnings, compared with their value after the November 1977 upratings.

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott): The basic retirement pension was 33.8 per cent. of average net male manual earnings in November 1977 and 29.8 per cent. on estimated April 1987 figures. The corresponding figures for a married couple were 50.8 and 45.3 per cent., respectively.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not disgraceful that, at a time when, for instance, managing directors throughout the country are increasing their own salaries at a colossal and almost unprecedented rate and are telling people who want a slight increase not to be greedy, pensioners should be hard put to it to pay standing charges and television licences? Surely the so-called boom that is going on should not allow that to happen. Was not the last increase of 40p a direct, pitiful insult to the pensioners, and is it not time that the Government did something for them?

Mr. Scott: If we are talking about pitiful points, the hon. Gentleman secures first prize. What the Government have done since they were elected is to see that the total income of pensioners as a whole—and that is what matters—has risen twice as fast as the income of the population as a whole. We have given pensioners a share in Britain's rising living standards.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. Friend concede that we want no lectures from the Labour party on caring for pensioners? Was it not the Tories who first introduced pensions for the over-80s and who twice restored the Christmas bonus that was snatched away by the Labour Government?

Mr. Scott: Although I am very tolerant, accepting lectures from those who behaved in the way described by my hon. Friend, those who pledged themselves to link pensions to earnings and then failed to fulfil their promises in government, is a bit thick.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Minister concede that one of the biggest losses to pensioners during the period of this Government has, of course, been the conscious break with uprating in relation to earnings and that that has led to a severe loss of pensioners' purchasing power? Will he at least

look at the principle of entering into discussions with the major utilities with a view to trying to abolish standing charges for pensioners?

Mr. Scott: With regard to those utilities, gas and electricity prices have fallen in real terms over the period of this Government. That fall and the general fall in inflation have helped pensioners. A mistake that is often made in these matters is to refer simply to the basic pension rather than to the total income of pensioners as a whole. Our plans and aims for the future mean that we will widen choice and improve opportunities so that people may receive extra help beyond the basic pension.

Mr. Steen: I recognise that the Government have done a great job for pensioners, but does my hon. Friend none the less agree that while he was out on the election trail most hon. Members on both sides of the House must have been struck by and concerned about the level and quality of life of people living on nothing but the state pension? When he considers the uprating of pensions, will he see whether the Government can do something for people with no income other than the one pension? Those people cannot maintain dignity of life simply on the current level of pension.

Mr. Scott: The vast majority of people who receive the basic pension would also be entitled to supplementary benefit and full housing cost benefit. They would also receive help with heating additions, insulation grants and a passport to a free Health Service. It is the duty of all hon. Members to encourage those people receiving the basic pension to ensure that they receive all the benefits to which they are entitled.

Mrs. Beckett: I welcome the Minister to this particular bed of nails. I sympathise with him, because he obviously has not been with the Department long enough to know just how dubious are some of the facts that he has been fed. The total income of pensioners has risen only as a reflection of the scheme introduced by the previous Labour Government, which the present Government have just emasculated. The figures that the Minister has given show that under this Government the standard of living of a pensioner couple has fallen by 5 per cent., and that rather more reflects reality. How many pensioners do the Government predict will be on income support by the end of the century?

Mr. Scott: This will depend on the levels of income support and how they move. Incidentally, I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her generous welcome. I note that she is fresh from the hustings. I regard this, not as a bed of nails, but as an opportunity to ensure that the vast sums of money that the Government spend and are continuing to spend on social security are targeted increasingly on those most in need.

Mr. Fallon: Does my hon. Friend recall that at the hustings the majority of pensioners rejected Labour's fake fiver? Does he accept that pensioners understand better than any other group in society the hyper-inflation that would follow from any kind of proposed linkage?

Mr. Scott: The electorate saw through the blank cheque offered by Labour Members, not least noting the divisions between the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould).

Child Abuse

4. Miss Lestor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what extra resources his Department is making available to local authorities to deal with the problems of child abuse.

Mr. Newton: The 1987-88 provision for personal social services was a 12.8 per cent. increase on 1986-87, representing a significant increase in real terms. This included additional provision for children's services and for training. Central funds have also been made available for a number of specific projects to improve the training of social workers and others who may be concerned with child abuse.

Miss Lestor: While in no way wishing to comment on any of the matters that were raised yesterday in a very heated atmosphere, may I point out to the Minister that physical or sexual abuse of children, which is now reported in far greater numbers, is about the biggest theft of childhood that any child can experience and that local authorities, despite what the Minister has said, are hard pushed to meet the demands on them for training in detection and how to deal with children who have been damaged? Is he aware that we further betray those children if, having encouraged people to come forward and give evidence about these matters, we fail to meet the needs of the children?

Mr. Newton: I would not entirely agree with the implication of the hon. Lady's remarks. I agree that the problem is not only one of resources, but of skills and expertise, and that is precisely why we have been putting so much additional effort—including, for example, co-operation with Great Ormond Street, the National Children's Bureau and the National Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Children—into improving training in those areas. That is important.

Mr. McCrindle: Quite apart from resources, does the Minister not feel that when doctors, social workers, magistrates and local authorities appear to be approaching this extremely important matter in divergent ways it is urgent for the Secretary of State, together, perhaps, with the Home Secretary, to call together representatives of all the strands of care in this vital area of activity to see whether a more cohesive approach can be created, including updated legislation if that proves necessary?

Mr. Newton: If I agreed entirely with my hon. Friend my answer would be yes, but the arrangements for proper inter-agency co-operation are working well in most parts of the country. It is clear that in at least one part of the country they do not appear to be working well, and our problem is to make sure that they work well everywhere.

Miss Mowlam: Will the Minister condemn the outrageous statement made in the House yesterday by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) when he equated the Cleveland social services with the SS?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend referred to a particular case which he said had been brought to his attention and on which I am not in a position to comment. *[Interruption.]* I am not prepared to comment on the hon. Lady's question this afternoon any more than I was prepared to comment on my hon. Friend's question yesterday afternoon.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Are not such cases always extremely difficult to assess, and does not intervention and help require great skill? Does my hon. Friend agree that social workers require proper training and co-ordination and that procedures between agencies must be properly implemented? Can my hon. Friend offer any encouragement that we shall update the law on child care, making more explicit the rights and responsibilities of local authorities and parents?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will know that we have published proposals in those respects and that within the next few months we are hoping to put out in a final form the draft guidance that we have had out for some time to make quite sure that inter-agency co-operation, which we all agree is needed, takes place effectively throughout the country.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Minister accept that often the increase in cases of child abuse occurs most when families are under pressure in areas of deprivation; that, as the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) said, some places need an increase in resources; that others, particularly the inner cities, need better co-ordination between the health and social services; and that in all regions the Minister should take a lead in implementing a system of second checks so that the rights of all can be protected at the first stage, because after that it can never be done adequately and suspicion will never be got rid of?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will have noted what was said yesterday by the Northern regional health authority in setting up a pilot scheme. We shall obviously want to look at and learn from the experience of that scheme.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Will the Minister accept from one who has just left the administration of social work training that those directly involved accept that there is a desperate need for additional resourcing in that vital area? All members of the social work profession accept that professionally trained social workers are the best way to avoid problems in society. Therefore, will he give an early indication of when we can expect a statement on the diploma of qualification in social work, to enable schemes on the certificate in social service and the certificate of qualification in social work to progress in preparation for 1991?

Mr. Newton: With her expertise, the hon. Lady will know that I had discussions with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work a few months ago. It is doing some more work on its proposals in order to refine them, and we shall look at those carefully when we have them later in the year.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: Does my hon. Friend recall the case of Maria Caldwell, who was brutally killed by her stepfather in my constituency? Surely he will remember that, as a result, a new Act came on to the statute book which altered the balance of the rights between parents and children. In view of the tragic situation that has now arisen in Cleveland, and the new figures produced by the NSPCC, will he ensure that any future legislation continues to keep that balance right, that we do not over-react, and always remember that children's rights must come first?

Mr. Newton: Having held these responsibilities at an earlier stage, and in a different capacity as well, I am very

conscious of the fact that the most difficult single problem is getting that balance right. Indeed, that has been illustrated within the past few weeks—by the Kimberley Carlisle case not long ago, on which we shall soon receive a report, and by what is now alleged to have happened in Cleveland. It is an acutely difficult problem, and I am very conscious of it.

Dr. Godman: Given that most perpetrators of this kind of abuse are men and that the overwhelming majority of victims are young girls, should not the Government, among other things, encourage the recruitment of many more women doctors into the ranks of police surgeons? Police surgeons have an important role to play, and they, too, must be given the right kind of training.

Mr. Newton: I believe I am right in saying that the number of women doctors generally is increasing. I look to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to confirm that. However, I shall certainly undertake to draw the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that, while women doctors may be becoming more numerous, women police surgeons are not? Even in the House today there is a tendency, which is reflected nationally, for people to bury their heads in the sand and miss the tragedy that is taking place in the nation. More resources are needed to deal with it. Can a social worker do a case conference, enter into multi-disciplinary conferences, and at the same time be on his or her patch dealing with the problems? Does the Minister accept that more resources are needed? Can such resources also be made available to Northern Ireland, or will that have to go to the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference?

Mr. Newton: I said in my reply to the original question from the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) that there had been a substantial increase in the provision for social services for the current year and that that took account of children's services. Of course, we shall continue to take those matters into account, not least the recent experience, when considering allocations for future years.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that, in view of the stream of horrific child abuse cases in recent years and the current hysteria that does not make for good policy-making, it is a serious failure that the Government have still not formalised guidance for dealing with such cases? As Cleveland is now referring children at a rate more than 10 times greater than the national average, does that not suggest that there are enormous and unacceptable variations in the handling of problems and that there are no agreed medical rules for diagnosing child abuse? Will the Minister therefore convene a national panel of all the relevant professional interests to try to achieve a national consensus on the identification, handling and treatment of a very serious problem that has been underestimated for years?

Mr. Newton: We already have in hand arrangements to prepare practice guidance for social workers, for health visitors and, in the sense that the hon. Gentleman suggested it, for doctors. As I said yesterday on a different angle of the problem, I frankly think that it would be better for us to get on with that work than to convene a national conference along the lines that he suggests.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House will understand why I allowed a fairly long run on that question, but I feel that we must now move on rather more rapidly.

Cancer Screening

5. **Mr. Simon Coombs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the national breast cancer screening programme.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. John Moore): The first nationwide breast cancer screening service in the world is to be established in this country within three years. Regional health authorities are making good progress in planning for their first centres, which will be set up by 31 March 1988. The remainder will follow within the next two years. The four training centres for staff involved in screening throughout the country have already been selected and are now being set up. They will be at Guildford, Nottingham, Manchester and Camberwell.

Mr. Coombs: May I be the first on the Conservative Benches to congratulate my right hon. Friend on his appointment and express the hope that in future he will find it possible to spend more of the nation's resources more effectively on those most in need? May I also ask him to confirm to the House that the Government intend to implement in full the recommendations of the Forrest report?

Mr. Moore: Yes, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment made that absolutely clear on 25 February when he announced the publication of the Forrest report and the acceptance of its proposals and decisions. While thanking my hon. Friend for his remarks, may I also confirm that what all of us on both sides of the Chamber ought to be concerned about is the effective use of national resources for caring.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Secretary of State confirm that in taking on the full recommendations of the Forrest report the Government will make available all the necessary financial resources to achieve immediate implementation?

Mr. Moore: Comments on resources were made quite clear on 25 February: £6 million in the first year, £13 million in the second year and £22 million in the third year. That will allow, as was also made clear in the statement, not simply for screening but for assessment of the diagnoses and for treatment.

Mr. Dobson: Is the Secretary of State really satisfied with a breast cancer screening system that will not screen any women under the age of 50 or over the age of 65?

Mr. Moore: I am satisfied that, unlike some Opposition Members, the Government took precisely the advice that was given in the Forrest report. When it was published in 1986 the Forrest report concluded that

the effectiveness of screening by mammography has not so far been demonstrated in women under 50 years of age. Out of some 15,000 deaths from breast cancer in the United Kingdom, over 13,000 are among women over 50.

Therefore, it is quite clear that the Government sought to implement precisely the Forrest recommendations. As for women under the age of 50, the Government have made it clear that research will continue to be pursued not only through Professor Vessey but through the Medical

Research Council. As for women over the age of 65, they may avail themselves of the service, but it is not specifically geared to them in the first instance.

X-ray Equipment

6. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department last conducted a survey of the safety standards of National Health Service X-ray equipment.

Mrs. Currie: The safety standards of National Health Service equipment are covered by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and more recently by the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985. It is the health authorities and other National Health Service users of X-ray equipment who are individually responsible for ensuring that these regulations are observed, and it is the duty of the Health and Safety Executive, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, to enforce compliance.

Mr. Cook: I thank the Minister for telling me what I already knew. I know where the responsibilities lie. Having avoided the question on the Order Paper, will the Minister tell me whether she is aware that medical opinion—and I guess that we must listen to medical opinion, even if there is conflict among it—says that 1,400 serious cancers per year are caused in the United Kingdom by the over-prescription of radiography and by the use of outdated and antiquated radiographic equipment? What does the Minister or her Department intend to do about that parlous state of affairs?

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that there are many medical opinions that would challenge vigorously the extraordinary statement that the hon. Gentleman has just made. Radiotherapy is one of the most long-established and best treatments for cancer that we have. May I also remind him, in case he had not noticed, that we are in the middle of the biggest hospital building programme in the history of the National Health Service. As part of that programme, in the past five years more than 120 new X-ray rooms have been provided. More than 50 of them were provided last year.

Board and Lodging Payments

7. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to abolish the time limits on board and lodging payments to young people on supplementary benefit.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): April 1989, Sir.

Mr. Boyes: Is the Minister aware that the Opposition greatly condemn these pernicious, punitive and unpopular board and lodging payments and the fact that young people will have to wait as long as 1989 for them to be abolished? Why cannot he for once act in a humanitarian way by announcing an immediate end to this lousy and rotten system that was introduced by the Government?

Mr. Portillo: From April 1989 unemployed boarders will look to housing benefit to meet their housing costs. The reason for its postponement to April 1989 is precisely because the local authority associations wished it to be that date.

Mr. Squire: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his elevation to the Front Bench. His appointment will give much pleasure to many of his colleagues. Does he accept that there are links between homelessness and joblessness, and that a consequence of the present system is that a considerable number of younger people are required to move every few weeks?

Mr. Portillo: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind personal remarks. The evidence from the surveys that we have conducted is not that young people are being forced to move from area to area. Many are remaining in the same area and claiming the benefit at the non-householder rate.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that during the summer months —

Hon. Members: Look at the hon. Member's jacket.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware —

Hon. Members: Look at the jacket.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is often worn in tropical countries.

Mr. Corbyn: Speaking on behalf of those in the hills, is the Minister aware that during the summer months many young people, especially in London, face a particular danger in that their board and lodging accommodation is taken away from them to make way for tourists, who are prepared to pay more money for it, and that consequently those young people are thrown on to the streets? What action does the Minister intend to take to protect those young homeless people in the cities from the ravages of the tourist industry?

Mr. Portillo: One of the reasons why we have imposed time limits is that we did not want to induce young people into this sort of accommodation. We believe that the levels that have been set for paying these boarding charges are appropriate to the areas in which those levels have been set.

Mr. Gale: Will my hon. Friend assure the House that no changes to the current DHSS regulations will be made until the changes to the use classes order 1986 have been clarified, to ensure that no further seaside hotels are turned into DHSS hostels by "dole-on-sea" racketeers?

Mr. Portillo: I can certainly reassure my hon. Friend that we are not going back to the bad old days. Under the new system boarders will no longer get special benefit rates over and above those that are paid to other claimants. They will have to meet the enhanced availability for work tests that are being introduced at present. Local authorities will have greater powers to refuse to meet unreasonable charges, rather than greater incentives to do so.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Minister not realise that if people are staying in the same place it is probably because of the number of times on which the Government's regulations have been ruled to be illegal and, therefore, not operative? Does he not recognise that the exemption system is working very badly, that there is tremendous resentment among those who are forced to move round and that it is particularly stupid that by doing so they cannot even get on to a housing list? Will he reconsider the answer that he has given?

Mr. Portillo: No. I am not aware of those problems. It appears to me that the system is working well. Twenty five per cent. of youngsters between 16 and 25 are exempt and there is the possibility of applying to the Secretary of State for further exemption. Some 280 cases for exemption have been considered.

Nurses (Pay)

8. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects nurses to receive the pay increase which the Government awarded them in April.

Mr. Moore: All nurses should have received the new rates of pay in their June pay packets and arrears by the end of July. This means that under this Government the pay of nurses in the National Health Service has risen since 1979 in real terms by 30 per cent.

Mr. Bowden: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that in inner London there are acute shortages of nurses in many departments in many hospitals? Can ways be explored to find the means not only of recruiting but of retaining those nurses in London hospitals?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is quite right to draw our attention to the problems of London, which do affect the employment not only of nurses, but of many other employers in the capital city as well. There are clear problems in relation to accommodation, the environment in which the hospitals are situated, and transport. These are being looked at, because I recognise that there is a particular difficulty with regard to the recruitment and retention of nurses.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why should a highly trained operating department assistant working in theatre earn less than a nurse? Is his or her contribution to the NHS any less, or the same?

Mr. Moore: If I were to start what I hope will be a lengthy career in this job by trying to decide on the relative differentials of those who are employed in the good, caring National Health Service I would be starting on the wrong track. The Government have sought to ensure that nurses and the Health Service as a whole have received real increases, which was their due, and I was delighted to be able to confirm that in the original answer.

Mr. Raison: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in places outside London, such as Stoke Mandeville hospital in my constituency, there are peculiar difficulties in recruiting nurses due to the high cost of housing and the abundance of other jobs? Will he give careful consideration to the possibility of extending some sort of pay weighting to help offset this?

Mr. Moore: I do not want to go into the technical details to which my right hon. Friend has referred, but I am aware of the problems of Stoke Mandeville hospital. All of us are concerned to ensure that nurses, who serve us so well, are properly rewarded. We are aware of particular parts of the country where there are problems that are specifically related to accommodation. I will concern myself particularly with the point that my right hon. Friend has made.

Benefits

9. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in his review of benefit rates in the tax year 1987-88, he will take account of the increase in average earnings since 1979.

Mr. Scott: Several factors, including any increase in earnings, may be considered when benefits are uprated, but the statutory obligation is to take account of whether benefits have retained their value in relation to the general movement of prices. We have honoured that obligation.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister acknowledge the fact that had average earnings been linked to pensions a single pensioner would be £7.40 a week better off and a married couple £11.20 a week better off than in 1979? Is it any wonder that pensioners feel abandoned and ignored by this Government? Does the Minister understand that if pensions rose, not only would that give greater dignity in retirement to pensioners, but it would have a good effect on the British economy and on employment, as the spending of pensioners tends to relate to British jobs and services?

Mr. Scott: Characteristically, the hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong. He is concentrating entirely on basic pensions. The income of pensioners in this country has risen by no less than 18 per cent. in real terms since we took office. By pursuing a pensions policy for the future that is based on choice and flexibility we intend to ensure that pensioners share in the increased prosperity of the country.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that it is a shameful indictment of the Government's pensions policy that the single pension today in France and Germany is more than 50 per cent. of average earnings, yet in this country under this Government it is only 18 per cent., and falling? Within 20 years, under current policy, it will be less than 10 per cent. Is it not symbolic of this Thatcher Government that the only people in this country who are denied a rise in living standards are the pensioners and the unemployed?

Mr. Scott: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman is still too hooked on the arguments of the hustings to recognise the reality of the matter. We have heard the arguments that are being put forward and of this so-called league of shame. In Europe this country is second only to Denmark on spending per capita on the elderly. That is the essence of our commitment to the elderly in this country in real terms. We make that commitment clear and we are second only on spending on the elderly per capita in the league in Europe.

Hospital Closures

10. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the proposal to close four hospitals in the Liverpool inner city area.

Mrs. Currie: None, Sir.

Mr. Parry: May I inform the Minister that any proposals to close the world-famous St. Paul's eye hospital, two specialised maternity hospitals and the women's hospital and to locate them in a Victorian-style royal infirmary will be fiercely opposed by the Health Service trade unions, community health councils, doctors and patients? Is that what the Prime Minister meant when she was talking about Victorian values?

Mrs. Currie: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the district strategic plan, which was published on 8 June and on which comments are required by 31 August. My cursory first glance at the plan we received it only a few days ago revealed that there will be a new development at Broad Green hospital, with new build accommodation for ophthalmology upgraded accommodation at the Liverpool royal infirmary site and a new combined unit for obstetrics and gynaecology. The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to Victorian values. Liverpool, like many other cities, is suffering from a surfeit of small, old Victorian hospitals from the last century. The health authority is trying to build a Health Service for the next century.

Hospital Waiting Lists

11. **Mr. Hind** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by how many the waiting lists in the north-west region have been reduced since June 1979.

12. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he is taking to reduce hospital waiting lists.

Mr. Moore: In the north-west region between 31 March 1979 and 30 September 1986 waiting lists fell by over 16,000, or 21 per cent. The need to make significant improvements in waiting times is a high priority for the Health Service, supported by the £50 million waiting list fund. I am determined that this drive will continue.

Mr. Hind: Can my right hon. Friend say what effect the waiting list initiative announced by his predecessor will have on the north-west region?

Mr. Moore: At this stage the north-west regional allocation will be £2.3 million, which we expect to produce results that will look after an extra 11,240 in-patients and day cases and 7,280 extra out-patients. That is in the first instance.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my right hon. Friend think that the waiting list fund constitutes a useful precedent for the official allocation of funds in the Health Service? If he does, will he ensure that it is extended to other areas, so that the most efficient use is made of taxpayers' money?

Mr. Moore: I am answering a question only about the Health Service and the special fund. My hon. Friend is right. The National Health Service is to be commended for the way in which, in the first year, it has made more effective use of beds and theatres and has enabled 100,000 additional waiting list cases to be treated by the use of the fund. I expect it to do equally well in the second year of the fund with the second £25 million.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is in Brussels for a meeting of the European Council.

Mr. O'Brien: Has the right hon. Gentleman received a report from his colleague the Government Chief Whip

about information received during the election campaign in my constituency concerning the shortage of skilled labour in the Yorkshire area? When will the Government do something about generating jobs and employment opportunities in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, where there is a shortage of job opportunities and skilled labour? When are the Government going to do something about it?

Mr. Wakeham: I did not receive the report to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but since 1979 the Government have spent £13.5 billion on employment measures and training, helping about 6.5 million people. Our intention is to continue that work.

Sir Bernard Braine: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his new office, which has given infinite pleasure to all his colleagues and, I suspect, to many right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches.

Can my right hon. Friend tell the House why the Government have not seen fit to include in the Gracious Speech any proposals touching the Warnock committee recommendations, at least one of which—experimentation on the human embryo—caused great abhorrence at the time and has caused widespread anxiety ever since? Is my right hon. Friend aware that such experimentation is now taking place without any legal protection?

Mr. Wakeham: I thank my right hon. Friend for his kind words. I know the interest that he has taken in this matter. The Government are now considering very carefully responses to the recent consultation document on the range of difficult and developing issues dealt with in the Warnock report. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will be making an announcement very shortly about the next steps. I can, however, make it clear that it remains our intention to introduce legislation in this Parliament.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the right hon. Gentleman now repeat the assurances given by the Prime Minister during the general election campaign that the Government are opposed to the imposition of VAT on food, fuel, children's clothing, children's shoes, new building, books, periodicals and newspapers?

Mr. Wakeham: I am happy to reaffirm what the Prime Minister said during the election campaign. The Prime Minister said that we had no intention of imposing VAT on food, gas, electricity, young children's clothes and shoes.

Mr. Hattersley: In which case, how does the Leader of the House account for the fact that Lord Cockfield, the Government's nominee in the Common Market, will tomorrow propose the abolition of zero rating and the imposition of VAT at between 4 and 9 per cent. on all those items which the right hon. Gentleman has now said will not carry VAT?

Mr. Wakeham: The right hon. Gentleman knows better than to say that European Commissioners act as nominees for a Government. Lord Cockfield will do what he thinks to be right. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is Prime Minister of this country, and I can assure the House that the undertaking that she gave during the general election campaign will be maintained.

Mr. Hattersley: The Leader of the House can absolve himself from the allegation of equivocation and the Prime

Minister from the allegation of deception by simply saying here and now that the Government propose to veto the Cockfield proposals. Do they, or do they not?

Mr. Wakeham: I have stated what the Prime Minister said, and reaffirmed it. At present the Prime Minister is in Brussels at the European Council meeting and she will make a statement to the House later this week. It would be extremely foolish of me to say anything more until that time.

Sir Anthony Grant: Will my right hon. Friend assure the Prime Minister that her attempts to bring common sense into the ludicrous financing of the Community has the wholehearted support of the country? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the rapacious attitude of the Socialist Greek Government is entirely out of accord with the spirit of the Community?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his points well. However, it would be wrong for me to say anything about the European Council while my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is there.

Q2. Mr. Michael Martin asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martin: In Scotland we have legislation for the poll tax. The financial director for Glasgow has stated that at today's rates in Glasgow it would cost every household member aged 18 and over £292. That means that some families who are the poorest of the poor will have to pay in excess of £1,000. As a former Whip, will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that when the English legislation comes up every Tory Member will go into the Division Lobby in favour of the English poll tax?

Mr. Wakeham: I must say that the revelations of what the poll tax will be in some Socialist-controlled local authority areas relate to the level of spending of those local authorities more than anything else. The community charge will not be unfair, because 69 per cent. of single pensioners and 83 per cent. of one-parent families will be better off. There will be generous rebates of up to 80 per cent. for all those on low incomes. Income support levels will be increased to reflect the average charge. The severely mentally handicapped and old people living in homes and hospitals will also be exempt. That amounts to millions of people.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. Friend recollect the clamour in Scotland when the rating revaluation took place there? Is he aware of the concern that would be aroused in England if rates were continued and a rating revaluation inevitably took place? Will he give an undertaking to the House that the Government will honour their manifesto commitment and give the people of England the benefits of the community charge that have already been given to people in Scotland?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend goes right to the heart of the matter. The existing domestic rating system is unfair and discredited. Local authorities are not properly accountable to ratepayers. Out of 35 million electors in England, only 18 million are liable to pay rates, and only

12 million pay them directly and in full. As my hon. Friend points out, a revaluation would bring chaos and would not restore accountability.

Q3. Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lloyd: Will the Leader of the House confirm that the poll tax, when applied, will mean that a working spouse will be legally responsible for the poll tax of the non-working partner? Will he confirm that a married pensioner couple will end up paying two poll taxes? Will he further confirm that the poorest people will end up having to pay some of this disgraceful charge?

Mr. Wakeham: I have already said that the community charge will be payable by all adults except those who are exempt, for example the severely mentally handicapped and old people living in homes and hospitals. People on low incomes will receive generous rebates and income support will be increased to cover the average charge.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that most of us are looking forward to the reintroduction of the Criminal Justice Bill so that when judges pass too soft sentences those sentences may be reviewed? At the same time does he agree that it is important that we re-examine what is the use of reasonable force by people defending themselves, their homes and families against thugs and burglars? Is it not time that the law was changed so that it was more on the side of the victim than that of the villain?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government will continue to make the fight against crime one of our top priorities. We have already reintroduced the Criminal Justice Bill, which, among other things, will ensure that lenient sentences can be referred to the Court of Appeal. I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has a note of my hon. Friend's other questions.

Q4. Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: Will the Leader of the House take time today to end the press speculation rife in Scotland to the effect that the Ministry of Defence does not intend to award the contract that it promised 18 months ago to Scott Lithgow on the lower Clyde? Is he aware that this will not only add to the lengthening dole queues there, but will end Scott Lithgow as a shipyard on the Clyde?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not think that it is right for me at this Dispatch Box to end speculation, but I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence makes an announcement as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Will my right hon. Friend do what he can to encourage the moderate elements in the teaching profession to raise professional standards? Does he agree that Mr. Fred Jarvis and the NUT reckon to do for education what Mr. Arthur Scargill and the NUM have done for coal?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right in saying that we want a teaching profession which is professional in its standards, is properly paid and meets the challenges of the end of this century and of the next century. We shall introduce a major Education Bill in this Session to deal with many of those matters.

Q5. Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: Will the Lord Privy Seal look at press reports published at the weekend, which showed that NIREX was looking for possible sites to dump nuclear waste in my constituency of Ynys Môn, and in Wales generally? Will he assure the House that there will be no dumping of nuclear waste in any part of Wales, bearing in mind what happened in various marginal constituencies in England just before the general election?

Mr. Wakeham: I sat for many months in my previous incarnation in the House unable to utter a word about NIREX. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, and I shall not add anything more to that.

Q6. Mr. Hunter asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hunter: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the recently published London Business School economic outlook, which predicts four years of solid economic growth, a sustained fall in unemployment and subdued inflation? Is this not further proof of the success of the Government's economic strategy?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the report. It is another example of increasing confidence in Britain, bringing greater economic growth and prosperity. When my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer goes to NEDC later this week, he may wish to refer to the seventh successive year of growth, with gross domestic product at record levels. In 1986, inflation was at its lowest for more than 20 years. Our growth is faster than that of all the major EEC countries, and investment growth has achieved nearly 4 per cent. a year since the 1983 election.

Q8. Mr. Michael Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brown: Do the Government have any plans, if not in this Session certainly during the lifetime of this Parliament, to reform the national dock labour scheme, which is the antithesis of what the Government stand for?

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to say on that subject at present, but I shall refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Safeway Food Stores (Food Contamination)

3.30 pm

Mr. Ron Brown (Leith) (*by private notice*) asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the contamination of food in Edinburgh's Safeway stores.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I understand that a small number of items of food and drink have been found to be contaminated in Edinburgh Safeway Stores. Analysis of other suspect items is continuing. The three stores affected are Cameron Toll, Davidson's Mains, and East Craigs. The Lothian and Borders police have instituted an investigation of the circumstances and these inquiries are continuing as a matter of urgency. Two members of the public have required medical treatment.

As this is a local incident, responsibility for the public health interest lies with the director of environmental health at Edinburgh district council. He is in close contact with the police. The company is taking increased security measures at all six of its Edinburgh stores. I strongly deprecate the reckless and irresponsible action which has placed the public at risk. I assure the House that I and the Scottish Home and Health Department will keep in close touch with the police and the environmental health authorities and will take any necessary further steps.

Mr. Brown: Does the Minister accept that, because of the lack of information from the statutory authorities and the police, many people are naturally alarmed about the products being produced for Safeway so that, instead of public co-operation, we have had a boycott? I appreciate that officialdom must do its job, but not enough details have been released about the three stores, the products affected, the type of poisons and what is going on. If the Minister wants public support, he will have to ask his subordinates in Scotland to explain exactly what is happening. We understand that there is a letter, but it may be sub judice and something that we cannot discuss here. More information must be released about the matter involving Safeway, whether it is in Edinburgh or elsewhere. It is a very important issue.

Mr. Forsyth: The provision of information is a matter for the police and the environmental health office at Edinburgh district council. They had to take into account the need to analyse substances. I welcome the joint press conference held yesterday by the police and the director of environmental health to give the facts of the case.

As regards public confidence, the company has endeavoured to minimise any risk, but obviously shoppers should remain vigilant.

Mr. Alastair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Will the Minister assure the House that, in the event of this unfortunate episode recurring either in any of Edinburgh's five Safeway stores or elsewhere, an announcement will be made to the public without delay? I understand that, although a press conference was held last night, the food in question was discovered at the Davidson's Mains or East Craigs stores either on Friday or Saturday of last week. Does the Minister accept that, in the event of those foods being fed to a child or an infirm person, the consequences could be most unfortunate? Whatever may

be the understandable commercial concerns of Safeway, will the Minister encourage the police and other authorities to make an announcement to the public quickly so that those members of the public who believe that they have bought contaminated food will know and can return it to the store and otherwise help the police with their inquiries?

Mr. Forsyth: I can only imagine that the hon. Gentleman did not listen to my answer. [*Interruption.*] My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has no direct locus in this matter; it is a matter for the director of environmental health of Edinburgh district council. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be aware of that. My right hon. and learned Friend, in common with everyone in this House and elsewhere, is naturally concerned and has arranged for officials to obtain reports on the situation from both the environmental health director and the police.

I am sure that everything possible is being done to bring whoever is responsible to justice. I do not believe that it is in anyone's interest to exaggerate or raise the political temperature in this matter.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is it not unfortunate that the Minister, on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box, is continuing with his bad habit of defending the interests of big business? Does he not understand that Safeway has a responsibility in this matter? Its public relations officer was in Edinburgh on Sunday and refused point blank to name the stores in which contaminated foodstuffs had been found. It is an absolute scandal to put the responsibility for the lack of information on the Lothian and Borders police, on the one hand, and the environmental health department, on the other.

Will the Minister change his bad habits and make sure that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) has said, if there is any recurrence of this nature in any Safeway or other store in Scotland the interests of the public will be put before the interests of big business?

Mr. Forsyth: May I say that I am delighted to see the hon. Gentleman back in the House. May I also assure him that the Scottish Office has every confidence in the judgment that has been shown by the director of environmental health of Edinburgh district council. There has been no suggestion that anything other than the overwhelming interest of the public's health has been considered by the parties concerned.

As regards the conduct of the store, I understand that it has taken a number of measures, including the introduction of uniformed security guards and stepping-up closed circuit television surveillance. It has also ensured that staff are regularly checking the shelves for any signs that foodstuffs have been tampered with. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman chose to make the point that he did on a matter of such seriousness.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is quite disgraceful that Labour Members should seek to use this occasion to gain cheap press headlines in Scotland? Does he also agree that the people concerned will be much reassured by what he has said this afternoon? There is full public confidence in the officials who are handling this matter.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that the director of environmental health and the police

are doing everything possible to remove this problem from Edinburgh. It is not a matter that can be dealt with by instant judgments. One of the difficulties is in obtaining detail on the analysis of the extent to which products have been tampered with. I assure my hon. Friend that everything is being done.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Is not the Minister's confidence in the Safeway management's handling of this matter somewhat misplaced in the light of its initial somewhat complacent statement, when the first contaminated products were found, that it thought that it had got to the bottom of the matter? Now that contamination has recurred, what will the Minister's Department do to ensure that public safety is maintained?

Mr. Forsyth: There seems to be an attack of sudden deafness on the Opposition Benches. The hon. Gentleman should have listened to my reply. I assure him that officials in the Scottish Home and Health Department, although they have no locus in the matter, are trying to obtain reports on the situation from both the director of environmental health and the police. We very much welcome the fact that a joint press conference was held yesterday in Edinburgh by the director of environmental health and the police, where the full facts as they were known were given. The situation is developing. It is easy to sit on the Back Benches and snipe at people who are doing their best to carry out their professional duty.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I speak as one whose constituents are involved. Does the analysis suggest in any way how the contamination was carried out? What is the Government's thinking as to the penalties that should be imposed on anyone who is caught?

Mr. Forsyth: Contamination has been found or is still being checked in coleslaw, cottage cheese, natural yoghurt, Safeway's cola and grapefruit juice. I understand that a number of things have been found, including broken glass and small quantities of arsenic, but the products affected are still being tested. The amounts that have been discovered are very low. As we react to the situation, one of the problems is the speed with which it is possible to obtain analytical reports. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that penalties are not a matter for me.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): At the risk of being non-partisan, I congratulate the Minister on his

first appearance at the Dispatch Box, although he is there by force of circumstance. Much doubt was put in many people's minds at the time of the original press conference. The police said that they had no firm clues, but they were confident that only four items had been affected, although only two had been found. Many people queried how that information could have been obtained if the police did not have any firm clues. That was combined with the assurance by the police and the company that no other stores were involved. Given that background and the withholding of information for a critical period over the weekend, is the Minister satisfied that all information that can be made available is being made available by the company to the police, the health authorities and the public?

Mr. Forsyth: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks, but it would not be appropriate for me to comment on a matter affecting the police investigations.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Does the Minister accept that, despite his irritation at having to appear at the Dispatch Box, there has been widespread public alarm about the matter and it is right that it should be aired in the House? Does he also accept that everyone on the Opposition Benches deplores the recent happenings, and that, if it is true, the use of ground glass, paraquat and arsenic, even in very small quantities, is a wicked and irresponsible act, and suggests an unbalanced mind at work?

It is difficult to comment while police inquiries are continuing, but may I reinforce the point made by several of my hon. Friends about the need to keep the public informed? I recognise that the Minister does not have direct responsibility, but he said that he is asking his officials to keep in touch. When he has received the reports, will he consult local authorities about the right balance to be struck between alarming the public, the perhaps understandable commercial interests and the safety that comes with knowledge? Does the hon. Gentleman accept, with me, that, in these difficult matters, to know is to be forearmed?

Mr. Forsyth: Public safety will always be paramount in any decisions that are made either by the police or by the environmental health officers. I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman about the depraved nature of the person who is responsible for carrying out the act, and the police are doing everything possible to bring him to justice.

EEC (Value Added Tax)

3.44 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It relates to the indisputable and undisputed fact that Commissioners of the EEC meet tomorrow to consider the extension of value added tax to items that do not at present bear that tax within the United Kingdom. It seems to me and to hon. Members on both sides of the House wholly intolerable that such consideration should take place in Brussels with the intention of making value added tax mandatory in the United Kingdom without the House of Commons being given an opportunity even to comment upon it.

I suspect that, were I to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10, Mr. Speaker, you might find that proposition difficult to resist. Were you to accept such a proposition, the issue would be debated tomorrow afternoon, by which time the Commissioners of the EEC would have considered the further imposition of VAT on goods that are presently zero rated in Britain.

My point of order is simple, Mr. Speaker. If you share my view that the House of Commons has a mandatory and automatic right to consider the potential increases in taxation in this country, then the Government should offer the House the opportunity at least to comment on that issue today. I ask you about ways in which that might be pursued.

Mr. Speaker: The answer to the right hon. Gentleman is that this is a matter that could quite legitimately be raised in the course of the debate on the Queen's Speech. I have no doubt that it will be.

Business of the House

Ordered.

That—

(1) Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) shall have effect for this Session with the following modifications, namely:—

In paragraph (4) the word 'twelve' shall be substituted for the word 'ten' in line 43;

In paragraph (6) the word 'sixth' shall be substituted for the word 'fifth' in line 60; and

In paragraph (10) the word 'sixth' shall be substituted for the word 'fifth' in line 83.

(2) Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government business on 11th December, 15th, 22nd and 29th January, 5th and 12th February, 15th, 22nd and 29th April, 6th and 13th May and 8th July.

(3) Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence over Government business on 17th July, 13th, 20th and 27th November, 4th December, 19th and 26th February, and 4th, 11th and 18th March and ballots for these Notices shall be held after Questions on Wednesday 1st July, Wednesday 28th October, Wednesday 4th November, Wednesday 11th November, Wednesday 18th November, Wednesday 3rd February, Wednesday 10th February, Wednesday 17th February, Wednesday 24th February and Wednesday 2nd March.

(4) On Monday 14th December, Monday 15th February, Monday 16th May and Monday 13th June, Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence until Seven o'clock and ballots for these Notices shall be held after Questions on Thursday 26th November, Thursday 28th January, Thursday 28th April and Thursday 26th May.

(5) No Notice of Motion shall be handed in for any of the days on which Private Members' Notices have precedence under this Order in anticipation of the ballot for that day.
—[Mr. Wakeham.]

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[FOURTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [25 June]

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—[*Mr. Churchill.*]

Question again proposed.

Deprivation and Inequality of Opportunity

3.45 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): We all try in this debate to make our first major post-election speech rather than the election speech in which we took so much pride—but I suppose that it is inevitable that memories of the election should hover over this week of *Hansard*.

So far as home affairs are concerned, when I think back on the election, I am not really thinking of the curious triangular exchanges in which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and I were involved with Mrs. Williams. I have a high regard for the right hon. Gentleman and his debating powers, but I do not think that any of us were at our best as we hurried from one local television station to another, like members of some demented repertory company trying to memorise our lines as best we could. I believe that the broadcasters need to think of a different form for such exchanges if they want to throw light, rather than heat, on the matters before the electorate. I cast that thought before them.

I am thinking rather of the dozens of conversations in market places and on doorsteps which, as I imagine every other candidate found, touched and sometimes focused on the question of crime. No one could emerge from this election campaign without a clear impression of the anxiety, and often the anger, which crime and the fear of crime arouse among our fellow citizens.

The opposition parties made no headway on this front because their analysis was not credible and their recommendations, when different from what we were doing anyway, seemed downright dangerous. It is not credible to make a general connection between the level of unemployment and the level of recorded crime. This is a contention that the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends frequently made, but it is not sustained by serious academic research. It ignores the fact that one third of crime is committed by juveniles; it flies in the face of experience in the 1930s; and it flies in the face of the regular experience of the victims of crime. Certainly it is true that in some areas, particularly the most discouraged areas, social conditions have a role in the fostering and in the prevention of crime, and that is a point to which I

would like to return. But to make a crude general link between unemployment and crime is an affront to the unemployed and incredible to everybody else.

No one in his senses supposes that there is a simple or single answer to the crime figures. But, after nearly two years in this job, I am clear that there is nothing inevitable about them. Our first task must be to strengthen further the law and order services, to which we have already given a unique priority.

I turn first to the men and money that are available to the police. The police have received a bigger increase in resources than any other major public service. In real terms, spending on the police in this financial year will be some 45 per cent. higher than in 1978-79.

At the end of April, police manpower in England and Wales, including both police officers and civilians in support, rose to a record level of 163,500. That is an increase of more than 17,300, including 11,300 extra police officers. This expansion is continuing. We are just about half way through the further programme of expansion that I announced on 20 May last year. I then foreshadowed increases of 3,200 extra police officers and 2,000 civilian staff in England and Wales. The extra civilian staff are expected to free over 1,000 additional police officers for operational duties.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On the issue of the recruitment of police officers and others, is the Home Secretary satisfied with the incidence of recruitment of women doctors to the ranks of police surgeons, or should not more be done in this regard? In the second Criminal Justice Bill will he continue the objective of diminishing the distress experienced by child witnesses in sexual and child abuse cases?

Mr. Hurd: I am not responsible for the first matter mentioned by the hon. Gentleman in-so-far as it affects Scotland. However, I shall certainly make sure that the hon. Gentleman receives the information that he seeks and I shall write to him about England and Wales. The Criminal Justice Bill will again contain the provision about allowing children to give evidence through a video link rather than in court. I think that the hon. Gentleman welcomes that provision.

The position about police manpower is rather different in London. In London there is no problem about authorisation. I have already given approval for an increase in the Metropolitan police establishment of 600 extra officers and 400 civilian staff. The actual strength of the Metropolitan police, though at a record level, has not kept pace with the increased ceilings. The Metropolitan police are now recruiting fast to fill this gap. They know that the authorisation and the money are there and that, other things being equal, I would expect to authorise a further increase in establishment next April.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Home Secretary respond to people's concern not just by increasing manpower but by seeing that the clear-up rate is improved? As he knows, the real problem in London is that the clear-up rate has got worse and people's perception of the chance of the forces of crime prevention helping the individual to reduce crime is negative and pessimistic.

Mr. Hurd: I am talking about manpower. The hon. Gentleman asks about the clear-up rate. I want to see the

[Mr. Hurd]

police in London and elsewhere being able to concentrate their efforts on the more serious and violent crimes and allowing crime prevention properly to get into action to prevent crimes against property, which constitute the great bulk of crimes. I shall return to that point shortly.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Before my right hon. Friend departs from the clear-up rate of the Metropolitan police, will he tell the House whether he agrees that the Metropolitan police are absolutely right not to do that which is done by many provincial police forces who trawl prisoners and the courts clearing up other offences merely to improve statistically the clear-up rate? Does he agree that the Metropolitan police are right to concentrate on crime prevention and the detection of more serious crimes?

Mr. Hurd: I am all against purely statistical exercises of the kind that my hon. Friend has mentioned. As he knows, we are trying to harmonise and bring some sort of regularity into the practices of different police forces in the taking-into-account exercise.

Outside London, I have to match the applications that I receive from police authorities and joint boards with the pace and extent of the expansion programme that I have just mentioned. As most hon. Members know from constituency experience, this is not easy.

Every police authority and joint board worth its salt can find some special reason why its own force should receive a greater share of the expansion than others. I have, indeed, increased their appetite by putting the percentage of the money that the Home Office finds for police expenditure up to 51 per cent. and with my colleagues altering the grant arrangements so that forces with the biggest establishments get the most grant. I have thus made it easier for police authorities to finance the expansion now under way.

In making these decisions about the further expansion of the police I shall, of course, continue to rely to a large extent on the professional judgment of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. Obviously, I cannot accept the simple proposition that more police officers lead to a decline in recorded crime, because anyone who studies the facts for a moment will see that that is not necessarily so. The case for expansion is rather that there are specific tasks in the prevention and detection of crime, in the maintenance of public order and in the upholding of the law which only police officers can perform and for which they need extra resources. The police are, of course, in competition for those resources with hospitals, schools, and everything else paid for by the public purse. My colleagues have hitherto agreed, on the basis that I have described, that the police should have priority and I am confident that they will continue to do so.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I have been following the Home Secretary's comments very carefully. When representatives of the West Midlands police force visited the Home Secretary in May and asked for an increase in establishment of about 1,000 officers over the next three years at the rate of 300 a year, why did the Home Secretary feel unable to accede to any part of that request, apart from the provision of more civilians? I am sure that the Home Secretary is aware that, regrettably, the west midlands now has the fastest rise in crime in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's point lies in my next paragraph, which contains specific reference to the west midlands and the experience of that force.

I do not believe that we have come to the end of the possibilities of civilianisation by any means. A civilian working for the police costs about half as much as a trained police officer. It must be right to ask chief officers again and again to consider whether there are jobs that are now being carried out by police officers that could be done by civilians.

I do not believe that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) has grasped the point that civilianisation resulted in the release of 1,000 police officers to operational duties between 1983 and 1985. During 1986 more than two thirds of the extra 893 civilians recruited in provincial forces enabled police officers to be released to operational duties. As the hon. Member for Erdington accurately stated, that is why I have recently approved an increase of 427 in the number of civilian staff in the west midlands. That is expected to release 382 police officers in the west midlands for operational duties. That answers the hon. Gentleman's question. There are more professional police officers entering operational duties as a result of decisions about civilianisation. However, there is more to it than that. In West Bromwich—which is not the patch covered by the hon. Member for Erdington, but is covered by the force operating in his area—there is a particularly interesting experiment going on in an attempt to expand still further the scope of civilian work, including the desk work and paper work which has hitherto been carried out by police officers and which the chief constable believes might be quite properly and effectively carried out by civilians. I am watching that experiment in West Bromwich closely to see how it works out.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): These matters are not confined to the west midlands, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is aware. The police force covering east and west Sussex has been in touch with my right hon. Friend and his Ministers about manning. There is a pressing requirement for more police officers, even after allowing for the further civilianisation programme to which my right hon. Friend has just referred. As my right hon. Friend has just said that he will consider what force increases are required and where, will my right hon. Friend take account of the special consideration due to Gatwick—I will not rehearse all the arguments on that matter now—and the requirements of the force covering east and west Sussex?

Mr. Hurd: Sussex will not be forgotten. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, my new colleague on the Front Bench, the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), and a host of powerful right hon. and hon. Friends will not allow me to forget Sussex. The force in Sussex will be treated on the criteria that I have announced and I hope that it will not be long before we can make an announcement about the Sussex force.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves that point, will he recall his experiences in Northern Ireland, when the civilianisation of certain jobs within police stations went ahead? To my knowledge, not one policeman was released on to the streets to carry out operational duties. Rather,

there appeared to be little protection from the police against malicious complaints and the extra police who were released were used to investigate those malicious complaints. Would not the Home Secretary be better employed in thinking of ways in which to protect the police, as they go about a difficult task, from the explosion of malicious complaints to which they are now subject?

Mr. Hurd: I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that across the water and here Her Majesty's Ministers have given full support to the police, and that includes putting in place in England and Wales a system for investigating police complaints, which goes a long way to meet the hon. Gentleman's concern.

Let me pass from the police to penalties; because police, penalties and prisons are the main sectors of society's front line against crime. The Gracious Speech foreshadows the reintroduction of the Criminal Justice Bill. I do not intend to go through its provisions in any detail since they are familiar to most hon. Members. The reform of extradition, the increase in the maximum prison term for carrying firearms in pursuit of crime, the criminal injuries proposals, are simply three of the important reforms which will once again be in the Bill. I am glad that with the Opposition's co-operation we have managed to put on the statute book the proposal for a serious fraud office and work on establishing that is going ahead.

Let me mention two important topics where we are considering changes in the Bill. We are deeply concerned about the widespread use of offensive weapons. We are committed in our election manifesto to taking action on the sale and possession of items which have no legitimate use but which can be used to injure and maim. I welcome an offer which I have received from the right hon. Member for Gorton to join us in discussing how the law relating to offensive weapons, particularly knives, could be strengthened. I have already set in hand a study of how the law relating to the possession of knives and other sharp-bladed instruments might be reinforced. I look forward to discussing with the right hon. Gentleman whether we can achieve common ground on this urgent matter in the hope that the Criminal Justice Bill will turn out to be the right vehicle for making a change.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Home Secretary aware how disturbed public opinion is by the recent publicity, certainly on television, where the police showed how easy it is to buy knives that are clearly offensive, and where, presumably, the only purpose in buying such knives is for criminal acts? I recognise some of the difficulties in drafting legislation, but is it not necessary to make it far more difficult for such knives to be bought?

Mr. Hurd: There is a difference between objects which can be used only for offensive purposes—for which we have a specific proposal in our manifesto—and knives—the schoolboy with a knife in his pocket; the housewife who has bought a bread knife at the supermarket; the carpenter with a chisel in his bag. That is the problem that we need to discuss.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): My right hon. Friend will be aware that police forces have echoed the concern that he has expressed today about the carrying of knives. If he can introduce legislation along those lines, he will also remove an anomaly which may be appearing and

which is linked with the carrying of firearms, where the proposed legislation will presumably recommend a possible life sentence. Many people would be concerned if they found that there was still no serious sentence for the carrying of knives, which should possibly attract a life sentence.

Mr. Hurd: The possession of an offensive weapon is a serious offence. The question is how to define it. However, I note my hon. Friend's point, which has validity.

We are looking again at the problem of the occasional over-lenient sentence which can do so much harm to public confidence. This has a long history. Anyone who listened late at night to the speech made by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) in support of clause 29 of the Criminal Justice Bill, will realise that there was a much better case for the clause than was generally realised. It ran into strong, though contradictory, criticism in this House, and in another place, from those who thought it went too far and from those who wanted it to go further.

We are actively looking at means by which this original proposal could be strengthened. My own reservations, like those of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney, about giving the Court of Appeal the right to increase a sentence have been practical rather than based on principle, although I recognise that there is principle here which is of great concern to many hon. and right hon. and learned Gentlemen in all parts of the House. My concern has been with the effect on the prison population and with the practical effect on the burdens of the new Crown Prosecution Service, which is still in its infancy. However, I am impressed by the need to go further than we originally proposed and I set in hand work to this effect before the election. The Bill will be republished tomorrow and will contain the original clause, but it can, and I hope will, be amended on its passage through Parliament to reflect the results of the policy exercise now under way following the debates on the Floor of the House, upstairs in Committee and in another place.

I must refer to the prisons, because this is, at present, the single most difficult responsibility which we carry in the Home Office. On 26 June, the prison population stood at 50,073 with an additional 506 prisoners locked in police cells. The system is designed to hold around 41,700 prisoners. This strain inevitably places tremendous difficulties on the capacity of the staff and system to cope. We are witnessing, month by month, a dangerous race between the rise in the number of prison places as the result of our prison capital building programme and the rise in the number of those sent to prison by the courts.

In the short term we are doing all we can to squeeze the greatest possible number of places out of the prison estate. Three detention centres have been converted into youth custody centres and another two to adult male prisons to improve the match between the accommodation available and the composition of the prison population. Other changes are planned, including the conversion of a category D prison, Ashwell, to a category C prison later this year with a net gain of 350 places, and of another detention centre to an adult female establishment.

In the longer term we remain committed to improving conditions for prisoners and staff by reducing overcrowding. This is not a luxury but a necessity, as anyone familiar with our prisons knows. The prison building programme includes a total of 20 prisons, providing 10,500 new places

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by 1995. Alongside this the refurbishment and maintenance programme will produce a further 6,900 new places over the same period as well as providing significant improvements in conditions.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is there any progress in the right hon. Gentleman's thoughts on the need for a forensic science laboratory such as was suggested by Dr. Brian Caddy? I understand that Mr. Gordon Wasserman of his Department is chairing some kind of committee into that problem. In the light of the right hon. Gentleman's experience on the question of the Birmingham six, into which I do not wish to drag him, could we have some assurance that thought is being given to independent forensic science advice?

Mr. Hurd: I am expecting no fewer than three reports in July on the future of the forensic science service. I am not sure whether they will touch upon the hon. Gentleman's constitutional point, but I hope to announce decisions about the future of the forensic science service as quickly as I can.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaugh): Before leaving the subject of new prisons, can my right hon. Friend confirm that his Department has written to all the local authorities in Cleveland, asking them whether they have a suitable location for a new prison? Is it not the case that because they are all Socialist-controlled authorities none of them will agree to that? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that his Department will not be overridden by the local government Labour party but will put a prison in Cleveland, where it is obviously needed?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that local authorities will take account of the clear national need for prisons. My hon. Friend knows that at the end of the day I have planning powers, but I would much rather proceed with co-operation. However, that assumes some understanding of the national interest by those concerned.

The size of the remand population is part of the problem. There has been a surge in recent years and about one fifth of those now in prison are on remand. We must take practical steps to relieve that pressure. The steps include the increase since 1979 of over 300 in the number of places in bail and other hostels, and various schemes which are helping courts to take more informed decisions about the granting of bail. Practice varies a lot across the country, and we are asking magistrates to examine the reasons for that.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): While the Home Secretary is examining the problem of remand prisoners being held in prisons, will he also examine the increasing use of custodial places for holding people under the immigration law, and will he ensure that in future they are released on temporary admission rather than being held in remand centres, often for long periods?

Mr. Hurd: As the hon. Gentleman knows—although I do not think that he approves—I have recently taken steps to provide specific detention accommodation for the type of people to whom he refers on the Earl William, thus removing the need to put them in prisons. They are not prisoners; they are not on remand before a court. The more that we can provide for them separately, the better.

Mr. Corbyn rose

Mr. Hurd: I really must get on. I have been quite liberal in giving way.

I turn now to crime prevention, which I believe holds the key to improving the general crime figures. We need to look at the portrait of crime in Britain. Less than 5 per cent. of it involves the use of violence against the person. The most serious offences make up one third of 1 per cent. of recorded offences. We are not alone in experiencing the changes that we have unfortunately experienced. International comparisons are difficult, because the Interpol figures lag behind events, and comparisons are bound to be imperfect. But looking at the increase in recorded crime in England and Wales between 1979 and 1983—the last available date—we find that it was roughly the same here as in West Germany, while France and the Netherlands showed increases of 50 per cent. to 60 per cent., roughly double ours, and Spain of over 100 per cent.

Let us look at the components of that situation. Our figures for homicide in 1984 were 2 per 100,000, compared with 4.5 per 100,000 for Germany and 4.6 for France. Our figures for rape were 2.4 per 100,000 compared with 9.7 for Germany and 5.3 per 100,000 in France. These are horrible crimes, and each example of them is one too many. But in these types of violent crime our record, although far from good, is better than that of our neighbours. Where we do much worse is at the lower end of the pyramid—the great mass of crimes against property—for example, burglaries, theft of cars or theft of possessions from cars, where our figures have deteriorated sharply.

These crimes against property are in general much easier to prevent than do detect. The prevention of crime is not a matter for the police alone. It is a matter for all of us, for Government Departments, for companies and trade unions, for voluntary agencies, for schools and social services, for the media and for each and every parent. There has been an outburst of activity on this front which we have welcomed and stimulated. The Home Office has sponsored five pilot projects in Bolton, Croydon, Wellingborough, Tyneside and Swansea, which have brought together the various local agencies and individuals to identify the problems of local crime and to seek solutions to them. I want to bring that sort of co-operative approach increasingly to bear on tackling the crime problems of the inner cities.

Even more remarkable are the 30,000 neighbourhood watch schemes which have sprung up, not because the Government have decreed or subsidised them, but out of the concern of individual citizens to achieve safer homes and safer streets. The time has come to take a further step forward. We intend shortly to start consultations with interested groups for the setting up of a new national body for crime prevention. I want this new national association for crime prevention to co-ordinate, stimulate and support local crime prevention activity. It will provide an umbrella organisation for neighbourhood watch schemes and crime prevention panels. It will, I hope, link with schemes for the unemployed through the community programme, and with the work of organisations such as NACRO.

There is a clear and close link between the efforts of the Home Office and the police to encourage the prevention and detection of crime and the policies that the Government propose for our cities as a whole. The Home Office is keenly involved in these proposals, partly because of our interest in the struggle against crime and partly because of our responsibility for community relations.

Good relations between the communities in our cities is obviously crucial to the harmony of those cities, and such good relations depend in turn on a system of immigration control that is firm and fair. The Gracious Speech referred to the Bill that we shall be bringing forward to make our immigration control operate more effectively, and to close a number of loopholes that have become apparent since the passage of the Immigration Act 1971. The Bill will deal with the problem of overstaying, with the problem of polygamous settlement and with the problem of those who come here claiming British citizenship without first having established that claim overseas. We intend to repeal section 1(5) of the 1971 Act, which gives a special position to the wives and children of those settled here when the Act took effect. A man who at present benefits from this provision will still be able to be joined by his wife and children but, like the families of other people settled here, they will have to meet the normal requirements of the immigration rules. In particular, husbands will have to show that they can maintain and accommodate the wives and children whom they intend to bring. I believe that that is perfectly sensible, and that the provisions of this Bill, when published and debated, will be accepted as common sense.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Who is going to make this massively subjective judgment on the suitability of the husband to receive his family?

Mr. Hurd: It will be made by exactly the people who now make it in respect of the great majority of people who try to bring dependants here. We are talking about the distinction which the law at present makes between those who were already settled here in January 1973 and those who have brought dependants here since then. I do not believe that that distinction is any longer justified, but the people who make the decisions will be exactly the same as those who do so now.

Mr. Corbyn rose—

Mr. Hurd: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have already done so once.

Our policy of firm and fair immigration control needs to be seen against the background of our general policy for wider opportunities—a policy which is just as important for the ethnic minorities who live in our cities as for anyone else. Twenty or 30 years ago, many immigrant families settled in the hearts of our cities because housing was cheap and jobs were available. Now many of them find themselves trapped, with their families, in a cycle of deprivation. I am delighted that we have made some progress over the last decade in changing attitudes. It must be good news that there were no National Front candidates running in the last election.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): We did not need any.

Mr. Corbyn: Look behind you.

Mr. Hurd: It must be good news. I am now answering the giggles on the Opposition Benches—that the problems of immigration and race relations were discussed in a peaceful and reasonable way at the election. Many conversations that took place during the election demonstrated that Asian and black electors are increasingly casting their votes in line with their judgment of the issues, and not according to someone else's racial stereotypes. The effort that the police are now investing in

dealing with racial attacks is more clearly recognised. The recruitment of black and Asian Britons to the police service is making progress, although the total figure of just under 1,000 is still much too low. I believe that gradually, step by step, city by city, we are showing that the ladders of opportunity in our professions, in our industries and in our public sector, are open for all to climb.

It is clear what the Opposition are about from their choice of theme for today's debate. They are simply continuing the argument about deprivation and inequality that they lost during the election. They are trying to represent the Conservatives as a party concerned only with the comfort of its supporters. But, if that were the position, we would not be putting forward the proposals in the Gracious Speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) made the point eloquently in the House yesterday, and in a newspaper today. If we were simply concerned with the comfort of our supporters, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education would not be concentrating, as he is, on enhancing the quality of state education. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment would not be concentrating, as he is, on housing plans to improve the opportunities of council tenants. My right hon. Friends in other Departments would not be concentrating, as they are, on stimulating job opportunities in our cities.

We believe in individualism. We believe in the right of the individual to pile up a good standard of living for himself and his family; we believe that that is natural, right and necessary. But we do not believe that it is enough. We look beyond that to the role of the active citizen—black, Asian or white—who uses his time and energy to improve the community in which he finds himself. We are looking to the active parent to work alongside teachers in correcting the defects in our schools. We are looking to the active tenant to help to put right what is wrong on the huge housing estates. We are looking to the active citizen to work with his or her neighbours and the police in neighbourhood watch schemes and crime prevention panels to defeat crime. We are also looking to the active business man and to the active voluntary sector to stimulate enterprise and jobs in the discouraged areas.

We do not abandon or renounce the role of the state or of public institutions, but we are clear that the problems that we see—and I think that we see them clearly—are best tackled not just by multiplying the powers and resources of the state and local government but by adding to the public effort the ingenuity and the generosity of the active citizen. That is clearly the spirit in which the Gracious Speech was conceived. I believe that it will commend itself to the House and to our fellow citizens as the plans in it mature and are brought to success.

4.20 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): It is as well to remind the House that the theme of this debate, as announced by Mr. Speaker, is deprivation and inequality of opportunity in Britain. Until the last minute or two of the Home Secretary's speech one could never have guessed that; instead, what he tried to do—with great success—was to dull the House with an overdose of tranquillisers. At least he was wise enough not to repeat during his speech his invitation to the leader of the Social Democratic party to join the Tory party. Perhaps on reflection the Home Secretary realised that if the right hon. Member for

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Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) were to join the Tories, his own hopes of becoming party leader would be outflanked from the Right.

We note that the leader of the SDP is present, taking time off from turmoil in toytown. His predicament is best summed up in the words of that haunting song from the appropriately named musical "Bells are Ringing":

"The party's over
It's time to call it a day
No matter how you pretend
You knew it would end this way."

The song contains the sage advice:

"It's time to wind up the masquerade."

Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will now do that and take part in his retreat to Devonport les Deux Eglises.

The Home Secretary's speech today was only the latest of a series of ministerial pronouncements that demonstrate their total insensitivity to the problems of the deprived areas. Last night we listened to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He was put up at the Dispatch Box no doubt because he is the Cabinet Minister with the most northerly seat in England—nearly 100 miles north of London. We have heard the ineffable Lord Young attacking elected local authorities—pretty rich from someone who has never been elected to anything—and being reproved for his ignorance by the director of the Merseyside chamber of commerce.

There has also been the Secretary of State for the Environment, a person to whom we are advised to pay serious attention. According to an imaginative writer in the *Financial Times*, the Secretary of State for the Environment is

"emerging as the Tory party's thinker on the regions."

Lately, we have been treated to some of the right hon. Gentleman's most profound thoughts. He told us that there were no golf courses for Japanese inward investors in the north of England, a part of Britain where it is almost impossible to move without breaking an ankle through stepping into a golf course bunker. He announced, with that elegance for which he is famous:

"There has bloody well got to be a golf course," and added:

"There ain't no room for prejudice".

If the Secretary of State for the Environment does not know much about golf courses, he is certainly an expert on prejudice.

About my own part of the country, Manchester,* the Secretary of State declared:

"An American executive doesn't want to live in a council house somewhere in the back of Manchester."

With my right hon. and hon. Friends, I represent "somewhere in the back of Manchester," a city which, like so many other towns and cities in England, Scotland and Wales, three weeks ago booted out its last remaining Tory Member of Parliament. I can tell the Secretary of State for the Environment that, whatever the wishes of American executives may be, thousands of my constituents would dearly like to have the chance of a council house. However, because of this Government they cannot have one. They cannot have one because the Secretary of State for the Environment has wiped out completely Manchester's housing subsidies. He has cut our housing investment allocation by 74 per cent., and he has reduced our housing programme from 2,200 a year to 77.

What is most significant, though, is the implication, from the remarks of the Secretary of State for the Environment, that the only way that we can have employment in Britain is through inward investment from foreign controlled multinationals. What an insult to British invention, innovation and enterprise.

An even bigger insult is, of course, the appointment as Secretary of State for Wales of an absentee landlord, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker). Just because the right hon. Member for Worcester can afford to buy Wales does not mean that he has the right to rule it. The Secretary of State for Wales is just a satrap of the Queen Empress herself, the right hon. Lady the Prime Minister. The main headline in *The Daily Telegraph* on Friday announced with due pomp that the right hon. Lady is to set out on a royal progress of her outlying dominions. The front page streamer headline in *The Daily Telegraph* marvelled at it and said:

"Thatcher visit to 'front line' inner cities."

It is, of course, an unprecedented move for the right hon. Lady to come to places such as we represent, and it exposes her to a certain amount of risk.

In an interview in the *Sunday Telegraph* the right hon. Lady likened her fellow citizens in our great cities, which have voted in Labour councils, to, as she put it:

"Bacteria on a culture controlled by inner city socialists."

The Prime Minister says that she wants such people to be regarded as

"individuals to be treated with respect."

On her anthropological safaris, I hope that she will do that. I hope that she will regard these visits, not as fleeting photo-opportunities, but as chances to talk to people and hear their problems. I hope that she will go to Dumbarton road in Glasgow, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) and talk to the pensioners who, day after day, queue outside a bakery to buy yesterday's bread, sold at half price.

I hope that the Prime Minister will visit the centre in Glasgow where teenagers are awarded certificates for skill in filling out job application forms, even if they rarely get the jobs for which they apply. I hope that she will meet the Manchester housewife who told me that her 13-year-old daughter had said to her, "Mum, when I leave school, how much do you want for my keep out of my dole money?" That is the kind of ethos that the Government are inculcating into the areas that we represent.

In her interview in the *Sunday Telegraph* the Prime Minister said:

"This country can never be strong unless the most able are allowed to contribute to the full."

I agree with that. I hope that before her visit the Prime Minister will brief herself about deprivation and division in our society and about how millions of able people are being prevented, not only from making their contribution to the full, but from making any kind of contribution at all to our society.

In the deprived areas of Britain—inner-city areas and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) said yesterday, in other areas, too—disadvantage starts right at the beginning of life, at birth itself. One of the most telling indicators of deprivation is low birth weight. Birth weight varies significantly, according to region. Babies weighing 2,500g or less at birth are classified as having a low birth weight, and in pretty well every inner-city area there are far more babies in this category than in the nation, averaged as a

whole. Sandwell, Newham, Nottingham, Hartlepool and Wolverhampton provide especially shocking figures, but dozens of other deprived areas have a similar story to tell.

Low birth weight carries risks of poor health, handicap and possibly early death, so it is not surprising that there is an alarming regional differential in perinatal mortality. All southern areas have below average perinatal mortality, but the north, Yorkshire, the west midlands, Merseyside, the north-west and Wales have above average perinatal mortality rates. In the most deprived areas of Britain babies simply have less chance of surviving into infancy. If they do survive, they live less long. Life expectancy in deprived areas is significantly lower than in the rest of the country. It is 32 per cent. lower in Burnley, and 23 per cent. lower in Blackburn and Middlesbrough. That is because deprivation often leads to chronic ill health.

The poorer one is, or the lower one's wage, the greater one's chance of being the victim of chronic sickness. The update of the Black report, published only this year, shows that that gap has widened. That update compares 1971 with 1981 to 1983 and shows

"A widening gap in all cause death rates between manual and non-manual classes".

The Black report puts it this way:

"A child born to professional parents . . . can expect to spend over five years more as a living person than a child born to an unskilled manual household".

Death from heart disease, for example, is much higher in the north, the north-west, Yorkshire and Humberside, the west midlands, Scotland and Wales than in the rest of Britain. Workers in manual occupations face considerable risks of disease and death. In 1984, 432 manual workers were killed at work and another 12,246 were seriously injured. Another 1,068 died of industrial diseases. No one ever got injured at work in the City of London, except perhaps from a bruised elbow shoving someone else aside.

Chances of getting a job are adversely affected by Government policy. One way of obtaining a decent well-paid job has traditionally been through obtaining an apprenticeship, but under this Government the annual number of apprenticeships has fallen from 155,000 to 64,000. Another way to rewarding employment is to get qualifications through higher education, but the chance of obtaining higher education depends very much on the would-be student's station in life. Among 17 to 19-year-olds, of those with fathers in the professions, 72 per cent. are in full-time higher education. Of sons and daughters of semi-skilled or unskilled workers, the proportion in full-time higher education is not 72 per cent., but 27 per cent. Of those accepted into British universities, 70 per cent. come from the top two social classes, 6 per cent. from the semi-skilled class and 1 per cent. from the unskilled social class.

The system of divide and rule fostered by this Government reduces opportunities all along the way. The Government's own figures show that the chances of getting a job are worst in the west midlands, the north-west, the north, Wales and Scotland. Chances of losing a job are highest in Yorkshire and Humberside, the north-west, Wales, Scotland and the north of England. No wonder that unemployment is worst in the deprived areas.

The programme and partnership authorities in England and urban areas in Scotland account for 33 per cent. of the economically active population, but contain 46 per cent. of those who are unemployed. The Secretary of State for Education and Science smugly prates on about choice, and

we got it again from the Home Secretary today. I should like the Secretary of State for Education and Science to explain exactly what kind of system of choice gives one of his constituents in Mole Valley eight times the chance of getting a job compared with the constituents of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell). Of course such a glaring inequality is not an example of proper choice, but it is a precise example of Tory choice.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): The right hon. Gentleman is entertaining the House to a most interesting sociological tour which rather implies that problems that have been known for at least a century — and which have been disclosed in virtually every serious sociological analysis in this country and in virtually every other Western democracy for at least 100 years — are somehow unique to the present Government. How can he possibly sustain such an argument?

Mr. Kaufman: If the hon. Gentleman can spare me time at the end of this debate, I shall take him through the material that I have here showing that the gaps have widened during the period of this Government.

Just to make sure that inequity is maintained in employment as well as in unemployment, the Chancellor of the Exchequer moves in and imposes the most glaringly unfair differential taxation. In income tax, national insurance, VAT and rates, a married man with two children on 75 per cent. of average earnings is paying £17.97 a week more than when this Government came to office, whereas a man with the same family responsibilities, but with 10 times average earnings, is paying £46.57 a week less in taxation. No wonder that there is a marked regional maldistribution in ownership of the material possessions in life which this Government exhort everyone to buy — and by those possessions they test their worth in society.

No wonder that people in the north, Yorkshire and Humberside, the east and west midlands, the north-west, Scotland and Wales are less likely to have telephones or to own deep freezers than are those in the rest of Britain. No wonder that under this Government the number of low-paid employees has risen by 1 million, that the number living in poverty has risen by 4 million and that the number living on supplementary benefits has risen by 6 million. No wonder that our nation is so wretchedly ill-housed, with a backlog for repair and renewal of £20 billion in the public sector and £30 billion in the Government's much-vaunted private sector, including the owner-occupied sector, where the Government boast about the increase in owner-occupation but do not tell us about the unavailability of improvement and repair grants for people who own houses and who would like them but cannot get them because of cuts in the housing investment programme.

This Government's answer is not to help, but to harm. Two weeks ago Mr. Peter Kegg, president of the Institute of Housing, drew attention to the terrible scourge of homelessness and bad housing. He pointed out that 25,000 people are living night by night in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Mr. Kegg said:

"Most will be suffering the most squalid conditions". He pointed out that last year 250,000 were accepted as homeless by local authorities, and that Britain spends the lowest amount on housing, both in the public sector and private sector, of any country in the developed world.

[Mr. Kaufman]

This Government have cut housing subsidies to the deprived areas by 65 per cent., and housing investment programme allocations for the deprived areas by 77 per cent. — far above the national average cut of 60 per cent., which is deplorable enough.

Mr. Winnick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only solution the Government have for rented accommodation is to bring in a form of market rents and to decontrol more or less along the same lines as the notorious 1957 Rent Act? Is he aware that the House Builders Federation — no friend by any means of the Labour party — has produced figures to show that in the south-east market rents in the private sector would be £90 against the £80 which on the whole owner-occupiers would be paying in mortgage repayments? Does that not demonstrate that the people about whom my right hon. Friend is speaking, who are in desperate need of rented accommodation and who cannot afford a mortgage, will certainly be unable to afford market rents in any deregulated private sector?

Mr. Kaufman: I shudder to think what will happen when the private landlords are let loose on rented accommodation. Knowing that in my own constituency people living in private rented accommodation in one room, sharing a bathroom with seven others, are paying £50 a week, I can only imagine what it will be like once the Secretary of State for the Environment gets his way with the free market.

The Government's own index of deprivation — and that includes housing deprivation — shows shocking numbers of people affected by multiple deprivation. That kind of deprivation is at its most grinding, according to the Department of the Environment's own figures, in places such as Hackney, Islington, Lambeth, Manchester, Newham and Southwark. No wonder that these most deprived areas are the ones that have suffered most fearfully from the Government's cuts in the rate support grant, with a cumulative loss of £1,400 million for the partnership and programme authorities in England and their equivalents in Scotland. That is Thatcher's Britain in 1987.

What do the Government intend to do about it? The Gracious Speech contains a curious medley of measures. It tells us that there is to be a Bill to give greater flexibility in licensing hours. The Home Secretary reminded us that the Government intend to introduce a Bill to tighten up immigration control. The Government intend to withhold benefit from school leavers under the age of 18 who refuse a place on the youth training scheme.

Changing the licensing laws sounds innocuous, but the Government have simply not thought through the problems that are involved in increasing the availability of alcohol, when all who are knowledgeable about such matters — the Royal College of Psychiatrists has made a recent statement about them — point to the alarming excessive use of alcohol in much violent crime, including wife battering, rape, child abuse and murder. Will the Government change the licensing laws without thinking through what the change will mean in terms of crime?

Tightening up the immigration laws, to which the Home Secretary referred, will have little effect on the level of immigration into this country, but it will cause great hardship to the lives of the small number of people who

are already resident here. An immigration Bill will make the ethnic minorities feel even more oppressed and discriminated against than they are already.

Last week we had the disturbances in Chapeltown in Leeds. I know that area well, because I lived there for 20 years from early childhood. I saw successive waves of immigrants — Jews, Poles and Afro-Caribbeans — move in. My home was in the street next to that in which last week's disturbances took place.

I condemn riots and unlawful disturbances wherever they take place, but the Government must be aware of the problems in deprived inner-city areas such as Chapeltown, where there is 50 per cent. unemployment among young blacks. Some 93 per cent. of 16-year-olds in the Asian community in Bradford are unable to find work. That statistic was quoted the other day by Mr. Lawley, who lost his seat in Bradford as a result of it. I warn the Government that the more they exclude young people from opportunities within the community, the more such young people will feel excluded from it. I warn the Government that more such young people, whether they be white, Asian or Afro-Caribbean, will feel that they owe no obligation to a society that accepts no obligation to them.

That is why the Government's decision to withdraw benefit from young people who refuse a YTS place is not only vicious, but dangerous. If up to 100,000 young people are deprived of income, the Government must not be surprised if some of them turn to crime. Already crime in the deprived areas is far worse than in the country as a whole. Already the pressure on the police is such that crime clear-up rates in the deprived areas are even worse than the low clear-up rates in the country as a whole.

Yet the Government are introducing policies that will make crime worse. Ten years ago the Prime Minister, when she was Leader of the Opposition, said:

"I hope to be Prime Minister one day and I don't want there to be one street in Britain I cannot go down."

She also said:

"I don't intend sitting on the sidelines while crime in our cities goes the way of New York."

There is now more crime in London than there is in New York, and the Prime Minister has presided over that. No doubt that is why in her speech last Thursday she did not once dare to mention crime or law and order. The Prime Minister dare not be reminded of her empty and broken promises, but I tell the right hon. Lady that if she goes on her outings to the inner cities she will hear a great deal about crime and the fear of it. She will hear a great deal about other profound problems as well.

In the deprived areas of Britain, babies have less chance of surviving to infancy. If they do survive, they have a higher chance of contracting congenital diseases. They have less chance of being brought up in a sound and secure home. They have less chance of getting an apprenticeship, less chance of further education, and less chance of a university education. They have less chance of any job, less chance of a well-paid job, less chance of keeping their job, and more chance of being made redundant if they get a job. They run greater risks of industrial injury and disease and of dying of such injuries and diseases. Their chances of hospital treatment are reduced by long waiting lists. They are more likely to be victims of crimes, and they have less chance of getting criminal injuries compensation. They often retire on pittance pensions and are sometimes unable to afford winter fuel. They tend to die earlier than their

fellow Britons, and when they die their survivors may have difficulty in affording them a dignified funeral because of the Government's abolition of death grant. From cradle to grave, millions are victims of Thatcherism.

In this debate last Thursday the Prime Minister claimed:

"People . . . have a higher standard of living than they have ever had before",

as a result of

"economic strength . . . that we have never had before."

[*Official Report*, 25 June 1987: Vol. 118, c. 53.]

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: Not at this stage.

A sufficient number of people believed the Prime Minister on 11 June to re-elect her to office, but the Prime Minister should never forget that 10 million people disbelieved her and voted for the Labour party. The Prime Minister should always remember that it is her duty to be Prime Minister of those 10 million people as well as of her own 13 million supporters.

For eight years the Prime Minister has behaved, not as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, but as the Prime Minister of the Conservative voters. She excludes from her consideration all the millions who disagree with her. That is why, whether the Prime Minister realises it or not, she is detested by non-Conservatives as few British Prime Ministers have ever been detested.

In her remaining period of office the test for the Prime Minister will be whether she can break out of her own prejudices to become the Prime Minister of the whole country. If she can, all of us will welcome that change. If she refuses to do so, the consequence will be an alienation and a division that could split the kingdom.

As a result of the right hon. Lady's electoral victory earlier this month, the future of the country rests to a great extent in her hands — to a great extent, but not exclusively. In this newly elected Parliament the Labour party will fight in every way that it can for a proper, decent and dignified place for all our people in a truly United Kingdom.

4.48 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): The debate on the Loyal Address in reply to the Queen's Speech is always an entertaining occasion, not least because it proceeds under the splendour of the pageantry in another place and because it is also anchored to the discipline of the proposals in the Queen's Speech. What we have before us now suggests that as the excitement of these few days begins to lengthen into the more measured experiences of the weeks and months we have a formidable programme ahead of us.

On this occasion the matter is enlivened by the fact that we have just had a general election. That could reasonably be inferred by listening to some of the speeches over the past few days. The point that I should like to make is that it reinforces the quixotic nature of our electoral system, whereby the number of votes that are properly secured do not have a necessarily close relationship to seats in the House. We have acquired the subtleties to deal with this over the years. Governments on the whole know that they rely upon consent as well as the mere arithmetic virtues of the Patronage Secretary to ensure the passage of legislation. From time to time that position passes from a

point of observation to where, although a principle is not breached, some new considerations are called into question. One would not wisely set aside what happened in Scotland in the election.

Of the 72 hon. Members who represent Scotland, 10 support the Government. That is not enviable for the Government. The question is whether we are most able to deal with that challenge by maintaining, broadly speaking, the "business as usual" stance which is apparent to some extent in *The Times* and in the *Chambef*. I understand that, but we must move away from the recent certainties of the Smith square election press conference sessions to the more anxious doubts that we must entertain when we consider the problems that face us now rather than as presented in the more exuberant atmosphere of the last few weeks. I have to say that I do not easily entertain the prospect of going through this Parliament assuming that we shall continue the present basis for Scottish affairs without consideration.

I do not for one moment suggest that any movement from the status quo would necessarily provide any benefit. I understand those who would prefer matters to be contained within the status quo, but I do not believe that it is appropriate for English Members to assume that Scottish affairs can be put to one side. We cannot be expected to carry on and manage as we have hitherto, accepting that a minority party in Scotland is the effective governing party in relation to Scottish business.

I have lived long enough to share with the Leader of the Opposition a deep desire not to retrace our steps to devolution and not to open up all the old arguments about what might be secured by new constitutional arrangements, unless there is a real certainty that they will lead to a conclusive judgment.

I am conscious that "Scotland the nation" is not an empty slogan. Scotland is a part of the United Kingdom with a historical tradition and national identity. I judge that Scots have been happy to be merged with fellow citizens of the United Kingdom to provide a Government, but we must remember that the future direction and debate of a country with such a history cannot be taken for granted.

I have no wish to suggest that we are on the threshold of seeking to re-open the separation argument but I have a modest comment to make to show that every English Member should think about these things. It would be no bad thing, just a gesture—gesture politics—to ask the Procedure Committee when it is established to take a comprehensive view of how we manage Scottish affairs in the House both in terms of general business and of legislation. I leave that modest thought with those who are in a position further to judge it and present the arguments to the House.

Mr. Dalyell: We were made the guinea pigs for the poll tax or community charge. As a former Leader of the House, how does the right hon. Gentleman fancy finding the time for the 90 statutory instruments which the Lothian director of finance says will be necessary? How would he find the money for the 70 full-time canvassers in Lothian region who each month will have to update the register which is to be kept separately from the electoral register? Is this not a classic case of someone saying, "Who will rid me of the rates? Find a way."? Junior Ministers have scurried away and come up with this.

Mr. Biffen: I remember when the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was famous for his monosyllabic interventions. There are many uncovenanted benefits of sitting where I now sit and the hon. Gentleman has just mentioned a further 90 of them.

A formidable programme has been assigned to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. He is a privileged Member of the Conservative party to hold that portfolio at this time. On occasion the Tory party needs the regeneration of its performance in social terms and in social direction. The education plans outlined in the Queen's Speech, and in subsequent statements, imply a major departure in social policy. This is the authentic voice of Tory social policy looking back for inspiration to people such as Rab Butler or Balfour at the beginning of the century. That has my wholehearted support.

I should like to make a few uncomfortable supportive judgments. First, I hope that we shall always remember that, however important is the private sector, it is state education which is the particular responsibility of the House. The collective tradition in education goes back to before the Education Act 1870. Since then that collective tradition has been identified with politics and the decisions of this House. I hope that it will be clearly understood that the proposals are designed to reinforce that collective tradition of maintained education and that they are not intended to be some oblique form of privatisation.

Secondly, we cannot disguise from ourselves that the proposals will almost certainly impinge upon the authority of local government. I cannot see how the foreseen transfer of powers can do other than enhance schools as entities to the detriment of the existing authorities. I accept and even welcome that, but we must act with as good a spirit of goodwill as we can. Some gesture must be made to the local authorities in their relationship with Government which will enable them to proceed more happily.

I hope that there will be a relaxation in the arrangements for capital receipts. I accept that local authorities are not all the same but we cannot draw the potential poison unless we take a more relaxed view on capital receipts.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Biffen: There, from the heart of Birmingham, comes Chamberlain Toryism. I am the modest rural variety.

Available resources always cause difficulties. Every Tory has in his diary the glorious 12th, with the slaughter, carnage and excitement that goes with it. The dry run for the Tories is the start of the public expenditure round. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury made a speech in his constituency at the weekend. One does not need much of a decoder to work out that someone in the Department said, "Something must be done and damn quick. There's no better place than your own back garden."

In that speech we were given the affirmation that the strictest lines will be taken in public spending, and that includes education. I think that that is a very unwise way of setting about these proposals. We cannot have education reform on the scale and with the intensity and comprehensiveness indicated in the Queen's Speech unless we are prepared to back it with adequate resources. Anything less than that would undermine the policy itself.

I wish my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench great and signal success in the execution of the policies contained in the Queen's Speech. It is a magnificent and radical document and I am delighted to support it. Furthermore, I have a suspicion that at the end of the Session my record will look much more amiable to the Patronage Secretary than those of some of my hon. Friends.

Our economic policy is supremely successful and I welcome especially the commitment to continue the fight against inflation. However, in all of these matters there is a balance to be struck between what can be secured by a successful economic policy and a commitment to a social policy. Such commitment is best exemplified in the education proposals. I am certain that those proposals will be considered generously by the House and supported by Conservative Members. This will be an exciting parliamentary Session and I am glad to be around.

5 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Like the Opposition spokesman, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), when I heard the Home Secretary speak I wondered whether he had forgotten that the theme of today's debate is "deprivation and inequality of opportunity" or whether, not having been a frequent visitor to the House for some time, I had perhaps arrived on the wrong day. None the less, I was glad to have a reassurance in the last few sentences that the right hon. Gentleman was aware of what he was meant to talk about to the House today.

As the House knows, I come from an area which has most felt these eight years of deprivation under the Tory Government. The past eight years have seen a steady decline in most aspects of Government in Northern Ireland. That means that when I come here, irregularly as I have of late, I do not come with the blind faith in parliamentary procedure that my right hon. Friend Mr. Enoch Powell felt and expressed when he came to the House. I must pay tribute to Enoch Powell today. He told me that this House was responsible to the nation and that it would not sell the nation short. He said that no Government could overcome the authority of this House. While I recognise Enoch's kindness to me, I am not convinced by his argument, especially after my experiences during the past four years.

I live in a part of the United Kingdom which the Home Secretary did not see fit to mention today when he mentioned other regions in the United Kingdom. I noticed that the right hon. Member for Gorton also failed to mention Northern Ireland in his speech. The situation in Northern Ireland is such that those of us who represent constituencies there honestly feel that a great deal of our time in the House is wasted.

I am glad to speak early in the debate because I want to warn hon. Members that I do not wish to hear them express their pleasure at the presence of Ulster Unionists in the House. That happens from time to time but I do not want to hear those hollow words. If there is to be any healing of wounds during this Session of Parliament, that healing of wounds must come about because we are made welcome. We certainly shall not be made welcome, or feel that we are being made welcome, if we are ignored as we have been in the past and if the government of Northern

Ireland continues to be a matter of arrangement between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and a Minister from a foreign jurisdiction.

I found it sad that less than a fortnight ago I had no choice or option as an elected Member of this House. I suppose elected by a much larger percentage of the electorate than the average Member and that the only way in which I could properly represent the feelings of my constituents was deliberately to disobey the law, allow myself to go before the courts, to state before the magistrate that I was not prepared to pay a fine for my misdemeanour and that I should be obliged to go to prison. Indeed, I went to prison. Anyone who believes in democracy and who is almost 50 years of age can take little pleasure in having had to go to prison, and can take even less pleasure in knowing that he is bound to go back again and again because his democratic rights have been taken away. The greatest deprivation that anyone could suffer is to have his democratic rights taken away and to find that the only way in which he can express himself is by going to gaol in opposition to the joint sovereignty of his part of the United Kingdom.

I know that many hon. Members wish to speak and I shall not be able to cover many of the points with which I should have liked to deal. However, I could not take part in a debate on deprivation without alluding to the serious state of the Health Service in the part of the United Kingdom in which I live. We have been deprived of resources to the extent that the lives of the people whom I represent are being placed in serious danger. Indeed, lives may be lost. We all know that the Government's security policy has been responsible for the loss of many lives during the past 15 or 16 years. A list of the dead in Northern Ireland runs to many pages. Those deaths are easily defined, if hard to accept.

However, those who die in our hospitals because we are deprived of resources are more difficult to identify. I find it strange that, with direct rule, those who should be fighting hardest to see that extra resources are made available are forced to defend their Government's record on health.

Recently, I criticised the Government, the Northern Ireland Office and the Department of Health and Social Security about the dreadful circumstances which exist in one of the hospitals in my constituency. It was not anyone from those areas of Government who defended the Government's record, but the general manager of the local regional health board who said that his board rejected what I had said. I was talking about the fact that, in the event of an electricity breakdown in the hospital, there is no automatic switchgear to bring in the auxiliary generator. For 20 minutes, half an hour or longer if it proves difficult to find an electrician—we do not have them on standby because we cannot afford it—the surgeons in the operating theatre must work by the light provided by a car battery.

On one occasion, when a man was having a serious thigh injury set and pinned, the surgeon had to put in the pins by feel as the X-ray machinery was not available. On another occasion a patient was anaesthetised for an operation but had to be brought round without the operation being performed because a lady from the delivery ward who needed a Caesarian section was in danger of losing her life and that of her child. That is the wing and a prayer situation under which the hospitals in my area must operate.

Recently, a seriously injured patient had to be transferred to the Royal Victoria hospital in Belfast. I am led to believe that the only anaesthetist available had to travel in the ambulance with the patient, who was on a life support system, and that if a shooting, bombing or serious car accident had occurred there would have been no one to anaesthetise the injured. Lives would have been lost. We have no one on standby between the hours of 12 midnight and 8 in the morning in the ambulance room of that hospital. We have to hope that an ambulance can be summoned from somewhere else if the one ambulance on duty is already involved in transferring patients to or from the hospital to Belfast or Craigavon. That is the position that a public servant is defending on behalf of the Government. Why do Ministers not stand up and tell us why they are putting the lives of patients in my constituency at risk?

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott) sitting on the Bench and I notice that he has been transferred to the Department of Health and Social Security. He will be an excellent man for the job because he has expert training in what is required during his term in Northern Ireland. The House will be aware that he spent many years covering up the Government's inadequacies on the security front and covering up the increasing death rate in Northern Ireland. Obviously, with what is happening in health and social services, his talent to cover up will be more than required. I am sure that before he leaves the post he will be known as Dr. Cover-up. I hope that he will not be called Dr. Death.

I can never rise in this House and ignore the Government's failure on security. A few days ago, Jim Nicholson, an ex-colleague of those in the House last Session, was dealing with constituency matters. By chance, I happened to be with him. We had not been long about our business when the police arrived to tell us that his wife and two young children had been attacked by terrorists. Fortunately—no thanks to any steps that had been taken to prevent such a situation and no thanks to the terrorists—Mrs. Nicholson and the two children escaped. Again, the record of the Government was well manifested on that occasion.

Everyone knows who the gunman was. Over the past few days the newspapers have done all but name him. He has been responsible for almost 20 murders and has served prison sentences, but he has been released to commit more murders. His victims have been people not unlike Mrs. Nicholson, and a 72-year-old lady was his last Protestant victim. But recently he had a personal score to settle and was responsible for killing one of his colleagues—his last victim. That murder is well known, but it has not yet come into the public domain.

Immediately after the murder attempt on Mrs. Nicholson, the terrorists left the scene and drove three quarters of a mile back to the house where they had held some people prisoner overnight to return the car they had hijacked from the house, to rip out the telephone and to make arrangements for their escape. They then disappeared. They certainly had no fear that there might be a helicopter flying over the scene, because they knew that no helicopter was available to the police, despite the promises that I have had again and again from the Government Front Bench. Resources are not being made available for the security forces to hope to be able to deal with the level of terrorism that exists in Northern Ireland.

[Mr. Ken Maginnis]

I shall touch only briefly on the Government's promises that concern hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies and I hope that we shall have other opportunities to elaborate in more detail on the unbearable deprivation and inequality of opportunity that exists. For most of us, deprivation in Northern Ireland means the deprivation of life to the people who live there and inequality of opportunity means the inequality of opportunity to live and make political and social progress with one's neighbours. There are those with whom I should like to share responsibility in Northern Ireland. They are those who from time to time have come to this House belonging to a different party and who have said that they feel underprivileged. I do not want them to feel underprivileged, but if they wish to work in co-operation with my colleagues and myself, those people will have to face the reality of political life. They must realise that it is not enough to say, "We deplore violence and want it to end," and then go out and fight elections, as they did in South Down, on the basis of "getting rid of the Prod."

It is a pity that no SDLP Member is in the House today, but I dare say that they will hear my words. As a result of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the SDLP can win seats only where there is a vast sectarian vote on which to call, such as in Newry and Armagh and South Down, and where they can go forward under the slogan, "Let's get rid of the Prod." They cannot deal with the opponent which the Anglo-Irish Agreement was designed to help them to defeat—Sinn Féin. It is significant that, in West Belfast, if we combine the votes of Joe Hendron and Gerry Fitt, the SDLP was roundly defeated by Sinn Féin — [Interruption.] Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I draw your attention to the Minister for Social Security, The hon. Member for Chelsea, who has the unfortunate habit of laughing at the wrong time. He did it when he had responsibility for the fiasco of government in Northern Ireland. It would serve him well to learn from his mistakes, for which we have paid.

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk): Get on.

Mr. Maginnis: I will get on, but it would do all members of the Front Bench, including the hon. Member for Chelsea, good to listen to what I have to say. The hon. Gentleman does not have to come here, as I have said before, and say that 32 of his constituents have been murdered by terrorists during the life of the previous Parliament. I do.

Unless the Government develop a sense of reality during this Parliament and realise that the vast majority of people are not impressed by a failed Anglo-Irish Agreement or by a triumphalist SDLP, whose only successes have been in constituencies where it was bound to win because of the massive sectarian vote on which it can call, there will be no point in people like me and my colleagues coming here to try to give the Government another chance to right the great wrong that they have done to the people whom we represent.

5.23 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): In thanking you for calling me to address the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do so with a proper sense of my position, rising to speak for the first time. My main reason for rising to speak so early in my parliamentary career is that my constituency

stands to benefit especially from the policies outlined in the Gracious Speech. I open with those words because they are close to the words used by my predecessor, the right hon. Jim Prior, when he made his maiden speech in November 1959. I pay tribute to his work as a Member since then. He achieved respect across the Chamber, and outside the House he achieved recognition across the nation.

The constituency of Waveney was called Lowestoft in 1959. Then, the new Member spoke about the appalling roads, about the need to ensure help—but if not help, certainly not discouragement—for fishing and farming, and about an unemployment rate of 8 to 10 per cent. Today, we have moved on a generation. Unemployment is 15 per cent., but falling—only six months ago it approached 19 per cent.—and Waveney district council, in conjunction with neighbouring Great Yarmouth borough council, made a joint submission for assisted area status to the previous Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. That application still stands.

There is no doubt of my support for the proven policy of allowing enterprise to stimulate economic growth and for selective help to come into the regions, but we should remember that one region's selective help may be another region's unfair competition. For instance, Waveney is trying to compete nationally to attract new jobs. Equally, with farming and fishing, competition is the watchword, but it must be fair. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will know of the feelings expressed by some of our farmers when they hear about the Italian dairyman who still has not translated the word "quota", and when Dutch quality controllers of eggs appear to be employed for their inability to see the eggs.

In 1959 Jim Prior spoke about grants and loans for building new trawlers and drifters. Since then, the Lowestoft fishing industry has reached rock bottom. Fishermen were told to stop feeling sorry for themselves, to stop crying about the Dutch competition, which brought the industry to its knees, and to modernise the fleet to compete. That is exactly what they did, investing millions of pounds to buy modern beam trawlers. Recovery is beginning, with a new £1.5 million fish market being built at Lowestoft, but until we have a system of licences, by-catches, engine sizes and vessel lengths that recognises that British fishing must be at least equal to that of other nations, the industry will not be the success story and the engine of economic growth that it should be. However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall return to that subject in a more appropriate debate.

No Conservative Member would argue with the need to address the problems of the inner cities, but there is a point of support for the cities beyond which people in the rural areas and the towns will not go willingly. Those of us from the shires, where county and district councils have been prudent, to the extent of making prudence an art form, will be looking carefully at the community charge and the uniform business rate with a view to saying that the cities are a priority, but that they are not the only need. I say this speaking for Waveney, which is at the very eastern edge of East Anglia. East Anglia is enjoying rapidly increasing prosperity, but that prosperity has not yet reached Waveney. In all the regions there are pockets of need and areas of prosperity. We cannot generalise on the regions, and we cannot lump all of East Anglia with the so-called prosperous south-east.

The House has days for debating Scottish issues and Welsh issues. Why—or rather when—will we have a day for debating East Anglian issues?

Until recently our road network was established on an entirely north-south structure, but population, development of business, the proximity of Europe and an increasing tourist industry have highlighted a need to develop a road network that takes us into the 21st century. I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), to recognise the need to put East Anglia in general, and Waveney in particular, on the road map.

In 1959 Jim Prior said that East Anglia was the Cinderella of the country's communications system. If we look at any other region, we can see that that is still so. Environmentally vital strategic non-primary routes such as the Halesworth relief road in my constituency have been awaited for these past 30 years. The third river crossing at Lowestoft, without which no significant economic development is possible, and without which the quality of life remains intolerable, has been awaited for these past 70 years.

The Government have largely won the arguments on defence, freedom of choice, trade union reforms, wider ownership, and, to some extent, jobs. Now they must win the health, pensions and education arguments. They will have my support. But taking out strategic schools, such as the Reydon area schools in Waveney, will restrict, if not completely deny, parental freedom of choice. In this Parliament, as well as debates on education and finance, schools deserve the benefit of community and social debate in considering their future, especially in the rural areas.

Waveney is an attractive coastal community. It is attractive to young and old alike, to the recently retired, and to television film crews. The market towns of Southwold, Halesworth, Beccles and Bungay are delightful compromises between old and new, between the developed and the conserved. I am confident that the thrust of the proposals that have been made to the House will further improve the lifestyle of the 100,000 people living in Waveney. We want a lot from those proposals.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your indulgence in permitting me to serve notice that East Anglia, that Waveney, that Cinderella wants to go to the ball of prosperity which so much of the country has already enjoyed and which the rest will now enjoy during the lifetime of this Parliament.

5.30 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): As a new Member, may I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in this debate.

I am extremely happy to begin my maiden speech by paying tribute to my predecessor for Dundee, East, Mr. Gordon Wilson. Gordon Wilson held Dundee, East for 13 years and through four different elections. That was no mean feat for a nationalist in an urban Scottish seat. He was very much a politician of the centre right as well as a separatist and I fundamentally disagreed with his political approach. However, Gordon Wilson had a deserved reputation as a hard-working constituency Member and I willingly acknowledge and pay tribute to him for the great deal of hard work that he put in on behalf of the people of Dundee, East in the past 13 years.

May I also take this opportunity to mention Gordon Wilson's predecessor, George Machin, as Gordon failed to do that way back in 1974. George Machin is a fine Socialist and a great trade unionist. He was an excellent Member of Parliament for Dundee, East and it was extremely sad that the work that he had put in on behalf of Dundee, East was not recognised way back in 1974. I hope that, this afternoon, the House will recognise and help to redress the wrong that was done to George all those years ago.

I am extremely conscious that, in common with Gordon Wilson, George Machin and even George Thomson, I rise for the first time in this House from the Opposition Benches. However, I must confess that, coming to this House as a new Scottish Member and in the wake of the 1987 general election result, it does not feel like arriving as a member of a defeated Opposition. In Scotland my party was not defeated. We had a marvellous victory and returned 50 of our country's 72 Members of Parliament. We received a clear mandate from the Scottish people for the policies that we put to them in the recent election campaign, including our policy for creating a directly elected Assembly in Edinburgh.

It is certain that, in the course of this Parliament, we shall return again and again to the Scottish question and to how to resolve the political crisis caused by the general election result in Scotland. Ministers must be brought to realise that they face a political crisis in Scotland. In my country there is no mandate for any of the policies contained in the Gracious Speech. The Secretary of State for Scotland will not make the crisis go away by trying to pretend that it does not exist or by blindly refusing to accept that 11 June ever happened in Scotland. The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot bury his head in the sand and wish away the rout of the Tories in Scotland—he must face the consequences. The consequence is that the Government cannot force unwanted policies upon an unwilling people. They will not be accepted in Scotland.

One of the subjects covered by today's debate is the Government's failure to regenerate Britain's cities. I would like to focus on one aspect of that failure—how it affects the unemployed of my constituency. Officially, there are 7,653 registered unemployed in Dundee, East—the highest number of unemployed of any constituency in the north-east of Scotland. The unofficial, and therefore more truthful and accurate, figure is, of course, much higher. According to the unemployment unit there are in fact 9,317 unemployed, almost 23 per cent. of the adult work force of the constituency. For those men and women, nothing in the Gracious Speech offers any hope. Those people will remain wholly unimpressed by the high-sounding phrases in the Gracious Speech about "sound financial management", the promotion of enterprise and the reduction of inflation being the keys to solve unemployment. They have heard it all before in every Gracious Speech since the Government came to office eight years ago.

Eight years on from those first promises to cut the long queues and to create a climate of enterprise, the unemployment levels that still persist in Dundee, East are more than twice as high as they were when the Government first came to office.

Yesterday, one Conservative Member referred to the problems of the north-south divide as being all in the mind. He could not be more wrong because, above all else, the north-south divide can be found in the levels of mass poverty and its bedfellow, mass unemployment, that

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persist today at unacceptable levels in various areas of our country. If Ministers are truly concerned to understand the rout of the Conservative party in Dundee, Scotland as a whole, Wales and many areas in the north of England, they should realise that it stems primarily from the Government's abject failure to deal effectively with the evil of mass unemployment.

During my time in the House, what I would most like to do is to alert and persuade Conservative Members of the seriousness of unemployment in areas such as Dundee, East. I want to make them understand that the unemployed want work, not words, from the Government. They want initiatives to secure existing jobs and to create new jobs. The Dundee unemployed certainly do not want the phoney restart programme or the different varieties of temporary employment schemes. Above all, they do not want the new and insidious work are projects, such as the job training scheme. They certainly do not want the prospect of compulsory training for the young unemployed. They want full-time, permanent and decently paid jobs. Surely, in this day and age that is not too much to ask, especially when the unemployed of my constituency only want one job each, while some in this House can enjoy more than one job, and are more than decently paid at that.

I believe that it is not even beyond the wit of this Government to begin to help to provide the opportunities for employment for the unemployed of my constituency. However, I fear that the political will to do that does not exist on the Conservative Benches.

In the Gracious Speech we were told:

"Measures will be introduced to provide further competition in the provision of local authorities' services." However, only last Friday, at a meeting in Dundee, the chairman of the Scottish branch of the Association of Direct Labour Organisations warned that privatising council services could mean up to 500 redundancies in a city such as Dundee. How can anyone square that scenario, painted by someone close to the local scene who knows what the local effect will be? How can that be squared with the Prime Minister's boast of last Thursday of steadily growing job opportunities for all? We must ask, "All of whom?" for it is certainly not those who live in the northern half of an increasingly divided and critically weakened kingdom.

The failure of the Government to understand or to appreciate the local dimension is one of the most disturbing aspects of their performance over the past eight years. They rule from afar and have no sensitivity to the sentiments and needs of the localities. Let me give the House an example. Dundee is the gateway to the north-east of Scotland and to an immensely important area, not only in terms of population, but also in terms of economic importance. Manufacturing industries, agriculture and advanced centres of education and research and development are all located throughout the Tayside and Grampian regions. However, we remain at a disadvantage because of our relative geographical isolation compared with other parts of Scotland and the United Kingdom.

My part of Scotland desperately and urgently requires effectively improved communications—not just by road, air and sea, but especially by rail. However, the Government have chosen to stop the electrification of the east coast line short at Edinburgh. The Government have

closed down the freightliner depots at Dundee and Aberdeen, thereby throwing an additional 10,000 freight movements a year on to our already hard-pressed road network. We learned only last week that the Government threaten to downgrade Dundee's railway centre by closing the train crew depot and transferring more than 100 administrative and manual jobs out of the city.

No one of any political persuasion locally in Dundee would agree with any of those Government decisions or proposals. It is not a matter of Labour-Tory or Left-Right divisions. Across the political spectrum in Dundee we want improved railway communications, yet we are being denied them by a remote, out-of-touch, authoritarian and over-centralised Government in Westminster. It is time that that Government began to listen to the voices of the localities elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Dundee has not been without its employment successes over the past eight years. I willingly acknowledge the success of the Dundee Project in particular, which brought together local authorities, the Scottish Development Agency and the private sector in a productive partnership. But the work of that project has simply not been enough—nowhere near enough—because throughout its lifetime unemployment in Dundee has gone on rising. That is because of the disastrous collapse in manufacturing employment across the spectrum of that sector in our city.

I should like to refer to one incident in the jute industry, which still employs around 1,200 people in Dundee and Tayside. The survival of that industry is seriously threatened by cheap imports from Asia that are being dumped in the United Kingdom market. In my previous role as convener of Tayside regional council, in January this year I led a delegation of employers and trade unionists to the Scottish Office in Edinburgh to lobby the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), who as Under-Secretary of State then had responsibility for Scottish industry. The Minister sympathised with our case for a system of quotas on certain classifications of jute products. He agreed with the seriousness of the threat to the very existence of the 1,200 jobs in our area, and promised to take up the matter with the Department of Trade and Industry as "a matter of urgency"—those were his words. Yet despite several telexes and telegrams since then to elicit a response from the Department of Trade and Industry, we still await a reply to the pleas of management and unions in my area to save 1,200 jobs.

The careless neglect and offhand treatment involved in that incident speak volumes about the Government's incapacity to appreciate or support the role of manufacturing industry. It is also one of the main reasons why unemployment is so high in my and many other constituencies.

Scotland cannot afford another four or five years of the same policies that we have endured for the past eight years. That is why Scotland voted overwhelmingly for change two weeks ago. If the House really is the mother of Parliaments and the seat of democracy, it will recognise the democratic decision of the Scottish people on 11 June and deliver to my country the changes that it so clearly desires.

5.42 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) and the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on their admirable maiden speeches, in which

they referred generously to their distinguished predecessors, paid customary tributes to their constituents and showed a clear grasp of the problems of the people whom they represent. It was a good beginning for both of them, and I can say confidently that we look forward with pleasure to their contributions to our future debates.

I was greatly moved by the speech of the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). With him, I hope that the House will have an early opportunity to discuss the problems of Northern Ireland and that we shall then heed the wise and magnanimous words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) about Scotland. I hope that we, particularly on the Conservative Benches, will show a full awareness, sympathy and understanding of the fears, hopes and above all the sensibilities of our fellow citizens in Ulster and Scotland.

I am in broad agreement with the greater part of the Queen's Speech. Given the Government's determination to encourage the development of a freer, more confident, yet more responsible, society, and given the evidence of a reviving economy, I find most of the measures proposed acceptable and necessary. However, I must say with great sadness and, indeed, puzzlement, that I note the inclusion in the Gracious Speech of a Bill to permit all-day drinking in public houses. I wish, therefore, to address myself to that subject, on which I agree with what was said by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman).

We are told that this Bill will give greater freedom of choice to the consumer. Perhaps. It will certainly boost the sales of the drinks industry, although, interestingly, it is not welcomed by all licensees. But it finds no favour whatever among the bodies concerned with the health and social welfare of the nation. It has no support from the medical profession or the specialist and caring organisations that have to deal with the consequences of alcohol abuse, such as Alcohol Concern and the Scottish Council on Alcoholism, which, ironically, were created and are funded by the Government.

I have just received a letter from Dr. John Havard, secretary of the British Medical Association, in which he asks me to make it plain to the House that the association is opposed to any extension of the licensing hours. He writes:

"There is no conclusive evidence that a change in licensing hours would decrease the health and social costs of alcohol abuse and every reason to fear that it would exacerbate an already deteriorating situation."

It is not as if the proposed Bill will receive unqualified approval from the drinks industry. Indeed, a campaign is already under way to extend all-day drinking to Sundays, with the object of extending the sale of alcohol still further. I have to tell the House that, assuredly as night follows day, the greater the availability of alcohol, the greater the harm that we can expect.

The World Health Organisation has been so concerned about the levels of consumption worldwide and the related harm to which they give rise that it has called upon all nations, including Britain, to reduce consumption by 25 per cent. by 1995. No wonder Dr. Havard asks this question in his letter:

"Why, when other countries are desperately tightening up on the availability of alcohol . . . are we taking up parliamentary time relaxing it?"

Why indeed? Those of us who have worked in the field of alcohol abuse and who know the facts have witnessed,

since the last reform of the licensing law of England and Wales in 1960, an enormous increase in the availability and consumption of alcohol, as the balanced system of controls that once helped to make this country one of the most sober in Europe has been dismantled stage by stage.

The measure proposed by the Government is one further step in that process, which has already resulted in the misuse of alcohol becoming one of the principal causes of premature death and avoidable illness, and the running thread linking a wide range of otherwise disparate social problems, such as carnage on the roads, violent crime, public disorder, marital break-ups and industrial absenteeism. There is no question but that the misuse of alcohol poses a profound and still-growing threat to the health and wellbeing of our society, compared with which the impact of illicit drugs, dreadful as it is, is relatively small. I speak as the chairman in the previous Parliament of the all-party committee on the misuse of drugs.

One would have thought that a new Government, determined as they are to build a new, confident, bustling but fair society, and knowing the problem and its impact on other comparable countries, would regard the control of alcohol and its misuse here as a priority. Not so. The Government are failing to see the problem in the round. They are determined to wage war against crime, yet there is a close link between alcohol and crime, especially violent crime, as every police officer knows. The Government are determined to tackle the problems of the Health Service and to help it cope with the enormous demands placed upon it, yet they seem oblivious to the fact that up to one in five hospital beds is occupied by a patient with an alcohol-related illness. The Government are determined to improve the education and training of young people, yet so far they have done nothing about the alarming increase in under-age drinking, reported by every newspaper in the land.

Mr. Winnick: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Bernard Braine: I have much to say. I would normally give way, but I want to stick to my single theme and leave my message with the House and, in particular, with the Front Bench.

The Government are determined to continue their drive to increase the efficiency and productivity of the economy, yet they must know that alcohol misuse is a cause of industrial absenteeism and inefficiency. Those are more than sufficient reasons for a determined assault to be mounted on the problems of alcohol control and misuse, and for that to be done before permitting any increase in drinking hours.

We might have expected, therefore, that a Government fresh from the hustings would have announced their intention of launching such an assault, following the example set by other countries. How ironic and how sad is the recent news from New Zealand, a country whose people are so closely related to ourselves, of a report presented to the Ministry of Justice in Wellington. The report came from a committee, presided over by a distinguished High Court judge, which had examined the association between alcohol misuse and violent behaviour. It recommended a period of closure of public houses in the afternoon, and the House will be interested to hear the reason given:

"Many English pubs are required to observe an afternoon closure and that must be regarded as one of the significant

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factors which enables English pubs to maintain a favourable image far removed from that of their New Zealand counterparts."

Precisely when that appeared, the Government's answer here is a short little Bill ending the afternoon break and keeping the pubs open all day—a proposition which, in the face of the facts, is quite extraordinary, suggesting as it does an attitude of supreme complacency, if not flippancy, towards one of the major social problems of our time.

It may not have been intended—I am sure that it was not—but the message for the young is appalling: their drugs are dangerous, but the most widely abused drug of all, which kills vastly more people than heroin, can safely be given freer rein. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has presented alcohol misuse and licensing hours as two entirely separate issues. They are not. Indeed, that view is wholly at variance with what the Government have said previously on the subject. The DHSS publication "Drinking Sensibly" remains the only comprehensive statement of Government policy on alcohol control with which we have been provided since 1930, more than half a century ago. That document reviewed the Scottish experience and concluded:

"The sharp increase in alcohol related harm in recent years might suggest that our licensing laws ought, if anything, to be tightened."

The harm since those words appeared in print has increased, not diminished.

My right hon. Friend's decision to go galloping off in the opposite direction is surely a classic example of the left hand of the Government—the Home Office—not knowing what the right hand—the DHSS—is doing. In doing so, they are giving the impression that they do not even care.

The Government, in justification of their untimely and retrograde proposal, seem to suggest that they intend no more than a modest tinkering with one limited aspect of the licensing laws which would be unlikely to have any adverse effect. The point is that we have had a quarter of a century of tinkering, and the cumulative effect has been adverse in the extreme. What is needed now is not another tinkering measure, but a coherent, co-ordinated strategy for the prevention of alcohol misuse, which is concerned not merely with pub opening hours, but with the whole issue of legal availability, fiscal policy, health education, advertising, and drinking and driving. Nothing less than that will do. It is simply not good enough for my right hon. Friend to say, as he did last week, that the Government are aware of the problem of under-age drinking and that they are

"sensitive to the effects of alcohol misuse on health and of its connections with crime",

while introducing a measure that will certainly have the effect of making those problems worse.

If the Government are determined to press ahead with further liberalisation, the least they can do is, first, to introduce additional measures to mitigate present problems. According to the Government's own survey, conducted by the OPCS not long ago, with the licensing laws as they are now—not as they may become—one in five 16 and 17-year-old boys drinks well above the so-called upper safe limit for a mature man, and they drink mainly and illegally in pubs.

The evidence shows that even 13-year-olds are getting drunk in pubs. Teachers are complaining about pupils returning to school under the influence of alcohol. There is evidence, too, of drunken teenagers causing trouble in the streets.

The drinking and driving problem is similar. The most obvious feature of the pattern of drinking and driving accidents is their close relationship to licensing hours. Alcohol-related accidents begin to occur significantly at midday, about an hour after the pubs open, and then increase steadily throughout the rest of the day, reaching a peak just after the pubs have closed at night. The obvious danger of the Government's proposal for continuous afternoon drinking is that peak accident times will begin earlier in the day, during the late afternoons, when schoolchildren and other especially vulnerable road users are about. Can my right hon. Friend assure us that his Bill will contain provisions for averting that danger?

I serve notice now that unless the Bill—which it comes before us—contains proposals for checking alcohol abuse it will be vigorously opposed by hon. Members in all parts of the House, who, in turn, will be strongly supported by the medical profession, by magistrates and teachers, and by all who care about the health and social well-being of our nation.

There is still time for my right hon. Friend to set up the same sort of co-ordinated machinery that exists for drug abuse—an effective inter-departmental committee. I pay the warmest tribute to the Minister of State who chaired that committee. The Government's action on hard drugs has been excellent and productive of results. Why ignore the most serious drug of all? There is still time for my right hon. Friend to end the contradiction between his own Department's view that there is no connection between licensing and alcohol abuse and the more realistic line that is taken by the DHSS, which has to fund the cost of ill health, and by the Department of Transport, which valiantly mounts costly campaigns to reduce the carnage on the roads—carnage that will most certainly be increased by any step to end the afternoon break and increase drinking hours.

My advice to my right hon. Friend—I say this in the kindest fashion, because I have great respect and affection for him—is to pause, reflect and study the wise advice of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, which told us not many years ago:

"Society has in many ways tried to have its pleasure, deny its responsibilities and hand the problem over to the courts or the caring agencies. We believe that an undoubted message for the future is that prevention has to be strengthened, and that this will eventually mean all of us drinking somewhat less."

5.58 pm

Mr. Robert N. Waring (Liverpool, West Derby): I start by congratulating the two hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches in the House this afternoon. The hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) particularly impressed me with his recognition that, even in an area that is regarded as fairly prosperous, there are pockets of unemployment. I am sure that we shall hear from him again, and I hope that we shall hear more from him on that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) made an excellent and robust speech in defence of the people in his area which, like my own, suffers not from pockets of deprivation but from multiple deprivation

on a large scale. My hon. Friend made that point clearly and he will be an admirable voice for the large Scottish Labour contingent which I, as a Merseyside Member, am pleased has joined us in the House of Commons. I look forward to many such speeches and to collaboration with my hon. Friend on future occasions. He made the point that, in Scotland, the Government certainly did not win the general election; and that there were many regions of England, too, where the election was grossly lost by the Tory party. Labour now has as many Members of Parliament in Liverpool as the SDP has Members in the entire United Kingdom. I hope that that will gain us a little bit of preference now and then in catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the eye of Mr. Speaker.

In my constituency there was a 9.5 per cent. swing to the Labour party and instead of a majority of 11,800 I now bask in a majority of 20,486. That is despite losing 2,000 electors, mainly council house tenants, and gaining about 1,000 owner-occupiers. Contrary to the popular myth, I am glad to say that those owner-occupiers are overwhelmingly supporters of the Labour party, and I am sure that they will stand by us in future.

The people of Liverpool and most of Merseyside support the Labour party, because they have been made to feel aliens in their own country. They resent what happened in the general election because they see no hope in a Government who have torn to shreds any ideas of local democracy giving anything to the people in that very deprived area. Following an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) last Thursday, the Prime Minister said:

"I hope that one day Merseyside will welcome the private sector within Liverpool".

Really, who does she think built the 4,000 council homes and the five sports centres that were provided as a result of the policies of the Labour-controlled Liverpool city council if it was not private firms? Who does she think benefits from the contracts that local authorities put out to tender as a result of being able to spend more money on all those necessities of life in areas such as the one that I represent?

The Prime Minister quoted the former Member of Parliament for Knowsley, North, Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk. Hon. Members may recall that he hoped that within 15 years of entering the House he would be the Prime Minister. That gives us another two years. Mr. Kilroy-Silk put Liverpool's troubles about job creation down to the Militant Tendency. I am no friend of the Militant Tendency. We have been able to solve some of our problems in Liverpool without the help of the Tory party.

The tremendous result of the Labour party in Liverpool in obtaining 155,000 votes as against 47,000 for the Tory party, is far and away in excess even of the very good result that we had as recently as 7 May in the local government elections. That result is attributable to the fact that in the town hall in Liverpool there is again a Labour administration admirably led by a progressive and effective former deputy leader of Merseyside county council, Councillor Harry Rimmer. I am sure that the House will hear much more about that Labour council in the years ahead as Labour is returned with increasing majorities year in and year out.

One cannot put the problems of Liverpool and the decline of the port and of industry down to the three and a half years during which time Militant had some hegemony on the Labour group. Between 1961 and 1971,

there was a Tory city council in Liverpool. Liverpool has no Tory MPs and next year it is likely to be the first major city in the United Kingdom without a single Tory councillor. That is very much in prospect. Between 1961 and 1971, about 80,000 jobs were lost in Liverpool. About 28,000 were lost in the port, the railways, the construction industry and utilities, 21,000 in retail and wholesale distribution and 31,000 in manufacturing industry.

There is no point in the Prime Minister saying that the difficulties in Liverpool are not the fault of the Government. The Government attempted to strangle local democracy, first by abolishing the county council and then by making attacks on councillors on Liverpool city council. To a large extent, the Liberal party has taken the place of the Tories in more ways than one on Liverpool city council. When the Liberal party under Sir Trevor Jones was in charge of the city, we lost jobs from Dunlop. British Leyland closed its plant, Meccano and Lucas of Broadgreen closed and the Tate and Lyle factory closed.

It is rather interesting to note that, during the last three years, the Ford Motor Company, which has a very important plant at Halewood, has increased its investment. The vice-president of Ford in Europe, Bill Haydon, has said that industrial relations at Ford in Halewood are much better than they were some years ago. As I have said, Merseyside county council was abolished by the Tory Government. Far from turning its back on private industry, that council positively helped it. In her speech during the debate on the Address the Prime Minister said:

"If we want more jobs on Merseyside, Labour-controlled local authorities will have to welcome private enterprise within their borders." — [Official Report, 25 June, 1987; Vol. 118, c. 53.]

I was the chairman of the economic development committee of Merseyside county council. It improved county help for the active small enterprise scheme, which gave grants on a large scale to small private businesses as well as to worker co-operatives. Over 9,000 jobs were generated on Merseyside as a result of our efforts and I am proud of the fact that we were able to introduce some of those small business men to the export market. We took them to the Hanover trade fair in order to introduce them to wider horizons.

We set up an enterprise board on Merseyside consisting of business men and trade unionists and within that board, largely because of the work of two directors of British Insulated Callenders Cables, that the first technical feasibility study was carried out about the possibility of a Mersey barrage scheme. All this was done under the Labour-controlled Merseyside county council. Tourism benefited and last year on Merseyside, largely because of the work we carried out on Merseyside tourism committee, £233 million was invested in Merseyside and helped to maintain 14,000 jobs. They are largely private enterprise jobs, but they were maintained largely as a result of the efforts of a Labour-controlled council.

The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) created a little bit of a myth when as the Minister for Merseyside, as he was called, he introduced a number of schemes. Nobody would decry the investment that has gone into the Albert dock scheme, which had the co-operation of a Labour-controlled county council when it was introduced. Nobody would decry the international garden festival. But does anybody think that anything came from the busload of business men that the right hon.

[Mr. Robert N. Wareing]

Gentleman spoke about in his recent writing entitled, "Where There's a Will"? If anybody believes that anything came from that, he can forget it. The jobs that have been generated and which have stuck on Merseyside are those that were created by the county council under both Tory and Labour administrations and to some extent that were created by the Liverpool city council in the more recent past.

The right hon. Member for Henley referred to the Waveney technology park in his book. He said that it was "an experiment to prove that where dereliction is far advanced and there is negative value to be removed from a site before anything can be done with it, public money is the essential factor that can produce the first growth."

Opposition Members have been trying to get that message across to the Government. If we want to generate private investment in Merseyside, Glasgow or other deprived areas, that investment must be oiled and motored by public investment. Even the hon. Member for Waveney, in his admirable maiden speech, said that there was a need for infrastructural schemes to be supported by central Government to help farmers and the port at Lowestoft. Every sensible person understands that.

I confess that I grieve for my country for what has happened as a result of the general election. I only wish that I could hope that the Government will respond to the words used in the House the other day by the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands, (Mr. Knox):

"given the proportion of the poll that the Government obtained in the recent election, during the next five years they should govern in a manner that shows respect for the views of those who did not vote for them. A real effort must be made to obtain consensus on as many issues as possible."
—[Official Report, 25 June 1987; Vol 118, c. 102.]

Yes, of course, under previous Conservative Prime Ministers there might have been some hope of that. However, the people that I am privileged and happy to represent recognise that this Prime Minister is totally lacking in humour and humanity. They recognise that the Government are a Government of doormats who are quite willing to go along with what the Prime Minister has to say.

I was very interested in the comments made by the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) about the licensing laws. I agree with him overwhelmingly. I hope that he will join me in the Division Lobby in opposition to that legislation. However, if the experience of the previous Parliament is anything to go by, Conservative opposition will be single-issue opposition. When it comes to a fundamental confrontation with the Government, when many Conservative Members realise that what the Government are doing is desperately wrong for the nation, they get cold feet. I suggest to the right hon. Member for Castle Point that he will probably be the only Conservative Member to join us in the Division Lobby when the licensing laws are debated.

It is rather ironic that the speech moving the Loyal Address to the Gracious Speech was made by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). The hon. Gentleman's grandfather some years ago, when he was a Liberal Member — at least, I believe he was on the Liberal Benches then, but what's the difference between a Liberal and a Tory? — warned us about the licensing laws and said something about the Tory party being the

party which extolled the virtues of patriotism by the imperial pint. Of course, he used the word "pint" advisedly in those days.

When we examine the Government's policies as they are presented in the Queen's Speech and in Bill after Bill, I very much doubt that we will find any attempt at consensus from the Prime Minister and her Cabinet of doormats. I am sure that any opposition will be expunged. We have heard already this afternoon from one of those Members who has been expunged. However, there are even more dire straits before us than the fact that the Prime Minister will continue with her intolerance.

On 30 June 1983 I asked the Prime Minister my very first question about the riots that had occurred in Merseyside in Liverpool and the fact that I thought that the report of the Central Policy Review Staff had predicted the riots. The Prime Minister stated:

"That report did not predict the Toxteth riots. It did, however, take the view that if high unemployment persisted and if the entire region became one of concentrated disadvantage the existing support services and income redistribution mechanisms would be inadequate to prevent social unrest." — [Official Report, 30 June 1983; Vol. 44, c. 698.]

The concentrated disadvantages have not become better since 1983. In Liverpool, Merseyside and elsewhere, they have become much worse. The social mechanisms for distributing income have also been made much worse, thanks to the Secretary of State for Employment who will reply to the debate. The social security legislation introduced by the former Secretary of State for Social Services has made those mechanisms much worse and has increased poverty. If the Government want to see the next four or five years pass without real social turmoil, without the prospect of more Chapeltowns, Brixtons or Toxteths, they had better look carefully at the person leading the Government. That person is safer on the streets of Moscow than she would ever be in my constituency, and she had better look again at the leadership of the Conservative party. She had better look for someone who can lead the nation through consensus with that vast area of the country that has said no to Thatcherism.

6.17 pm

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): I join other hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) and the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on their excellent maiden speeches we look forward to hearing from them in future.

The first Queen's Speech of a new Parliament is a very important occasion because it sets the tone for the next four years or so. Therefore, I want to address my remarks specifically to my friends and colleagues on the Conservative Benches and especially to my right hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench. I am not interested in what is happening on the Opposition Benches. Opposition Members have their own problems and they will have to solve them.

I tried to intervene in the speech made by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), but he would not allow me to do so. I hope that the House noticed that throughout the speech — which, as usual, was good stuff and very amusing — there was not one reference to the responsibility of local government towards the inner-city areas. That was very significant, and I hope that it was noted by the House.

The difference between this Queen's Speech and others is that we have all come fresh from the hustings. I do not believe that my experience on the hustings is different from that of my hon. Friends or any other hon. Member. Obviously there are regional differences. For example, although I have 7,000 people drawing benefit in my constituency, hardly anyone mentioned unemployment. I appreciate that that was probably not the case elsewhere. However, they did mention, in strong terms, education, health, housing and law and order. I received general approbation on what the Government had done in the economic area. They thought that we had been successful; and most of my constituents are much better off now than they were when the Government came to power in 1979. On services, the people were really saying that they would vote for us this time but in a relatively lukewarm way because they did not think that we had done well on the services that I have just mentioned and they felt that we did not really care. The argument went on along those lines.

Most popular concepts are unfair and there are no exceptions to the rule. We were not the only party that had that problem. Not every member of the Labour party is a card-carrying Militant, but that was the general appreciation, particularly in local government. Unfair though those concepts were, particularly on health and law and order where considerable progress has been made in recent years, unless they can be altered over the next four years or so, we shall face massive desertions at the next election.

On that point I very much agree with what my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) said this afternoon. Organisation and efficiency are one thing, and they are very important in relation to the services, but there is no avoiding the crucial issue that more money needs to be spent in each of those areas. I should be much happier if I felt that that point was fully grasped by the new Government.

We have already heard quite a bit about the north-south divide this afternoon. That name masks the fact that there are prosperous and deprived parts in all regions and that essentially this is a problem of the inner cities. Therefore, I welcome strongly the part of the Gracious Speech which deals with urban development corporations. I am sure that they are the right solution. I represent a constituency which has achieved tremendous progress and prosperity as a result of a new town development corporation, and I am sure that that is the way to proceed. But please let us make it plain that these are temporary, not permanent, solutions, and that what we are trying to do is to prime the pump in the deprived areas. We are not acting against local government; we are complementary to it.

Before I entered the House — all too long ago — I served for many years in local government. I know that many of my hon. Friends are angry at the antics of some Labour authorities, and so am I. They have destroyed the essential trust that used to exist between central and local government. But if one supports local government, as I do, as an essential part of Britain's constitution, it must be accepted warts and all. My fear is that all our efforts in these areas will be dissipated by the lengthy debate and parliamentary process that we shall have on the community charge.

Frankly, I think that the community charge is a bad tax. It is inefficient, expensive and unfair. I made those

reservations in my election address, so I am in the clear, as they say. But the point that everybody has missed whether one is talking about the community charge, the rating system or whatever the system of local government finance is that the burden is too great. Unless the burden is reduced, either by putting teachers' salaries on to the Exchequer, or something like that, no system will be able to work. That is vital to any consideration of the subject.

I hope that over the next four years we shall turn our attention more and more to the progressive elimination of poverty in Britain. I hope that we shall start, first, with the old and then with the young. By that I mean that I hope that we shall move pensions slowly towards a percentage of average industrial earnings. That cannot be done too quickly. I understand the costs involved and the burden that that puts on working people. None the less, I hope that we shall work progressively towards that end.

Secondly, for the young, I hope that we shall steadily increase child benefit because that is the easiest and quickest way to eliminate family poverty. However, to do that, it must be taxed, and I hope that that will be done. These measures to reduce poverty can take place without being a disincentive to work because payments are made to those in work and out of work. That will have a great effect on the so-called divide about which we have been talking this afternoon.

Let me suggest one final method for the elimination of poverty. I hope that we shall have another look at the earnings limit for those who are on benefit. The present £4 limit is ridiculous. It is bad economically and socially, and I hope that that can be dramatically increased.

No one doubts the successes of previous Conservative Governments on the economy, industrial relations and foreign affairs. In addition, no one doubts the radical nature of the measures that are detailed in the Gracious Speech, most of which I welcome wholeheartedly. But all will turn to dust and ashes unless we improve the position of the disadvantaged in Britain and create in truth the one nation that we all desire.

6.26 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in the parliamentary Session. You have taken a great deal off my mind, and, at the end of this speech, you will have taken a great deal of pressure from my kidneys. I also want to remind you of a promise that you gave me some 14 years ago when, as a young Labour party trainee organiser, I was asked to organise an industrial visit for you in Carlisle. Later that evening, in the Labour club, you told me, with your arm around me, that if there was anything at all that you could ever do for me I had only to ask. Fourteen years on, and the start of this speech, I intend at some time to hold you to that.

It is a great pleasure for me to represent the constituency of Makerfield. Makerfield is an important and traditional part of the south Lancashire coalfield and an important part of the Wigan metropolitan borough council. Before I deal with the major issues of the debate, I should like to take the opportunity to thank two former hon. Members of the House for my being here. Their contributions were radically different, but because of them I am here making my maiden speech.

The first person whom I want to mention is Michael McGuire, who, from 1964, represented the former

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constituency of Ince and the constituency of Macclesfield. During most of that time he enjoyed the support and understanding of his constituency party. For 24 years he carried out his duties in a way which brought him personal credit. The fact that in later years he fell out with his party can in no sense detract from that. It would be churlish in the extreme not to recognise that for most of that time he had the support of his party and in a genuine sense I wish him and his wife every success in his chosen new career.

The second person whom I want to mention was the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, my father. Over the years he has treated me as a father usually does, giving me sound advice which I usually did not take right hon. and hon. Members know that that is a trait that I have learnt from him—and he has always been an encouragement to me. It is a little disappointing that he is not present in the Chamber this evening as a Member. I also want to wish him and my mother, Margaret, every happiness in their retirement.

Macclesfield is one of those constituencies in the north-west of England which is still suffering from the ravages of industrial decline, the legacy of the industrial revolution and the exploitation of the coalfield and the textile industry and the heavy engineering industry. Despite the sensitive and radical way in which the local authority in Wigan has tackled those problems, over the last eight years the authority has been dragged back by the Government's actions.

What I found appalling in today's debate, and in previous debates, is the complete insensitivity of Conservative Members to the plight of working people—not only in the north, but in every part of the industrial heartland of Britain. There is a real lack of recognition of the problems facing working people, not only because of the industrial decline brought on by the Government but because of the major effect on the community produced by poverty and the crushing disability that it brings to working people and their families. The major attack by the Government has been on those people in the front line—Labour local authorities.

I make no apology for being a Socialist member of a local authority. I think that it is time that the people in this country recognised the important role that local authorities play in a democratic local structure, and in developing caring policies to ameliorate unemployment, to deal with inequalities in society and to stabilise it. Democracy is a very fragile thing. It is not just about Members of Parliament, but about real people in communities. One of the major reasons that we have a stable democracy is the role that local authorities have played since the industrial revolution, and the way in which, after the first world war, people came first in their hundreds and then in their thousands to town halls up and down the country and put forward persuasive changing attitudes to policies on housing, social services, transport, education and training.

Those radical changes in policies were significant in terms of where we are today. The people who put them forward did so not out of books, but out of recognition and understanding of living in communities deprived of opportunity—deprived by Conservative Governments and business people whose interests were merely to take profits from communities, and to hell with the people who have to live in them. It is essential, in this and in future

debates, that we recognise and understand the importance of local authorities not only in tackling the problems of unemployment and deprivation, but in tackling in a real sense the feeling of alienation among working people, women and the unemployed. If anyone fails to recognise that alienation, he walks about blind. He fails to understand—Conservative Members often do not want to understand—what is happening in the nation today.

In my constituency, which is a microcosm of the north-west, unemployment in two of my wards is over 20 per cent. In the ward that I represent—Abraham Ward—nine out of 10 school leavers last term did not go in to a real job. Car ownership is among the lowest in the country. We have the largest incidence of one-parent families out of Manchester, the largest number of single-person households and the lowest income in the borough of Wigan—itsself a low-income area. Probably worst of all, we have the highest dependency rates of families living on one income. On council estates in the Wigan area, between 65 and 74 per cent. of all households are relying on a single income to maintain the family. That income is usually supplementary benefit or some other form of benefit. Twenty-three thousand families in Wigan each week live on supplementary benefit, and we have the largest live load of sickness benefit claims in the United Kingdom.

This is the last school week in Wigan before the summer break, and we have 50,950 pupils. Of those, 10,187 are on free school meals. That represents 42 per cent. of children who go to school and take meals. So far in this financial year, the authority has paid out £440,000 to 13,857 young schoolchildren for clothing grants because their families live on or below the poverty line.

In a recent speech in Wigan, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) talked about young workers living in a "hamburger economy". That is certainly true in Wigan. Even if there is the opportunity of a job, the jobs available are menial and pay less than £1 an hour. Training is almost non-existent, except for the training schemes run by Wigan metropolitan council—the youth training scheme, the youth technology scheme, the scheme for young workers in the co-ops, the scheme for small businesses to employ young people, and subsidies for the private sector to take young people on. Those are all through a Labour local authority initiative. Why has it been done? Because the private sector which is represented on the Conservative Benches has given up. It is not interested in investing in jobs in Wigan or the north-west. It sees its role as investing in the City; investing in a fast buck; investing in money instead of people and jobs.

What does that mean for our people? They are denied access to the nation's wealth, and denied opportunities that abound for those gentlemen on the Conservative Benches every day of the week. They are rarely seen in the Chamber. Between 8 o'clock in the morning and 10 o'clock at night, when they turn up to vote, where are they? They are in the City, stripping the nation of its assets. This is an unrepresentative Parliament. [Laughter.] Conservative Members may laugh, but they are stripping my people of real opportunities and jobs. That is the typical face of Toryism: they sit and laugh with their feet up on the Benches. The tragedy is that in my constituency people have their feet on benches because they have never been given a job opportunity.

I want to ensure that I do not use unparliamentary language, so I shall use two words. I want to talk about

the abuse of the whipping system. I was shocked and surprised when I came here. Over the past week the relationship has been either pimpish or impish. Conservative Members have been asking me, cajoling me and writing to me: "Please will you be a pair? I do not want to be here after 10 o'clock." The reason is that they do not want to come and represent their constituents; they want to come and represent the interests of business, and when they are not here, they are representing those interests in the City of London. The Opposition should be exposing that type of scandal to their constituents.

I do not mind a whipping system that gives people time off for parliamentary duties. But I object to its being used for people to go into the City and the law courts to earn their coin, while we are sitting here at 10 o'clock watching them voting in the Lobbies and having a go at working people in all forms of legislation.

We must recognise that local government is one of the most emancipating features of modern Britain. In all aspects of our activity, it is local authorities that keep the nation together, and that must be recognised. If the National Health Service is the jewel in the crown, local government must certainly be the crown.

In the Gracious Speech, the Government have proposed a set of legislation that is desperately trying to undermine the work done by Labour local authorities. As a Socialist and a member of the Opposition, I am certain that Labour councils up and down the country will continue in a logical way to represent the interests of our people. I want to ask Conservative Members a number of questions, and they should ask themselves these questions. Do any of their children have to be sent on a youth training scheme? Do any of their children have their dole cut for refusing to be exploited by JTS? Do any of their married sons and daughters have to live on deprived housing estates, surviving on less than £50 a week? Will any of their children be sharing textbooks bought by the PTA at a local raffle? How many of their parents died last winter of hypothermia because of the cuts in benefits for working people?

This Government will not inflict poverty and hopelessness on their own people, and we must ensure that they do not inflict it any longer on our people.

Mr. Wareing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had always been under the impression that when a maiden speech was being made in the House, hon. Members, no matter how much they might be provoked or hurt by a few home truths, would listen to that speech in perfect silence. Am I right or am I wrong? During the excellent maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) there were one or two nasty interruptions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman has already made one overlong speech. He need not make another on a point of order. Yes, it is the convention that when an hon. Member speaks for the first time in this Chamber he is heard without interruption. However, I heard nothing that was out of order.

6.40 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): It falls to me to congratulate the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) on getting over the first hurdle that all hon. Members have to overcome. He seems to add a certain

tartan. I would almost say Clydeside element to the red rose of Lancashire, and it is not necessarily any the worse for that. We appreciated his remarks about his predecessor, because Michael McGuire was respected on both sides of the House—as was the hon. Gentleman's father who for many years was on the Chairmen's Panel. The hon. Member for Makerfield has two excellent mentors in Michael McGuire, and his father, Hugh McCartney. If one wants to influence colleagues in this House, I suggest to him that it is always better to give colleagues, however much one may disagree with them, the benefit of the doubt.

I intend to take up the suggestion of the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), and speak to a subject on which there may be consensus. Also, it fits in with the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon). I regret that in this long series of debates on the Queen's Speech no day has been devoted to the National Health Service. The House knows that in the last Parliament I was the senior member of the Select Committee on Social Services. We devoted a great deal of time and energy to the subject. A number of reports, as yet undebated, lie on the table, all of which are directed towards improving the NHS.

I draw the attention of the House in particular to the continuing problem of how society can provide the ever-increasing resources that are necessary to meet the ever-growing demands on the NHS. It is not a new problem, but for too long we have not faced it. Since its creation the NHS has been a growth service. The demands upon it have always exceeded the resources that have been made available to meet those demands. In 1970 the British Medical Association reported in an important survey:

"the National Health Service has never, since the early years, been able to fully cope with the rising demands that it, and the parallel development of new methods of treatment, were responsible for stimulating."

In 1977 the then Labour Secretary of State told us bluntly in her publication "The Way Forward":

"demand will always outstrip our capacity to meet it."

At the same time we must acknowledge that over the last 40 years more resources have gone into the NHS. That is not always fully recognised.

If we return to 1948-49 and translate the then expenditure into 1986-87 values, we find that expenditure in 1948-49 on the National Health Service in England was £3.822 billion. By the last financial year, the figure for England had risen to £15.725 billion. That is a fourfold increase in 39 years, but it is not enough. There is evidence throughout the NHS of demands not being fully met—hence the waiting lists for operations.

The problem has arisen partly because the NHS has been a success. Advances in modern medicine have increased rather than reduced demands upon the NHS. That is well illustrated by the increasing numbers of very elderly, frail and dependent people. As more people live into their eighties and nineties, the overall number of people who will be dependent will inevitably grow. So must the resources to provide the necessary care, both within the NHS and in the community at large.

The Royal Commission on the National Health Service, which I remind the House was established by the last Labour Government and reported before they left power, gave this important warning:

"Whatever the expenditure on health care, demand is likely to rise to meet and exceed it. To believe that one can

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satisfy the demand for health care is illusory, and that is something that all of us, patients and providers alike, must accept in our thinking about the NHS."

If one took that view literally one would despair, but I do not despair. However, all of us across the party spectrum must recognise the key economic fact that the potential demands for health care are virtually unlimited, whereas the resources that are likely to be made available to meet those demands will always be limited. The extent to which we can reduce that gap is dependent upon our relative success or failure in managing our economic affairs. In health care, as in pensions, the aspirations of the caring society must rely upon the success of the economic and commercial society to seek fulfilment.

Since the commercial society is doing rather well, what are the reasonable resource expectations of the National Health Service at the start of this new Parliament? When Ministers appeared before the Select Committee in the last Parliament, they quoted a target of 2 per cent. annual growth rate in real resources. Since then there has been last autumn's statement. Additional money was made available by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to help to reduce waiting lists for operations. Do the Government remain committed to achieving a 2 per cent. growth rate? Furthermore, will additional resources beyond the 2 per cent. already quoted be provided for the NHS?

I believe that because of the improvement in the economy we can do better than 2 per cent. I should like the growth rate to be up to 5 per cent. a year, but that may be pushing my luck a bit too much. Therefore, I would settle for the rate of growth in our economy as measured by the gross domestic product. I thought that this was an original idea of mine until a memorandum came through the post that had been produced by the three leading professional groups within the NHS—the Institute of Health Services Management, the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing. They held a press conference on it.

The memorandum contains exactly the same proposals as those I am putting before the House; I give up credit for authorship of the idea. I am quite happy to give them full credit for it. The proposal is that spending on the NHS "should rise in line with national income, with separate provision for demographic fluctuations and major new illnesses such as AIDS."

I hope that at the start of the new Parliament we shall take that as our national aim and achieve consensus upon it.

Having said that, there are still major allocation and management problems. I shall not detain the House with them this evening, other than to say that I would like to see us move from annual funding to triannual funding preferably. It is extremely difficult for members of regional and district boards, and even individuals running various parts of the service, to operate on an annual basis. We know that the Treasury operates on an annual basis, but we must try—as we did with the universities in the past—to have a longer period of financing so that people know where they are.

Secondly, what is the further potential for efficiency savings within the NHS? My right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Social Services will recall that one of his Ministers told us:

"this is not a process that can go on indefinitely".

In other words, we cannot look to savings of the order that we have achieved in the last two or three years to be permanent. There is, therefore, the problem of the need for extra resources to compensate for the extra that we have obtained in the last two or three years from savings.

Thirdly, there is the whole area of pay. I need not remind the House that the NHS is inevitably labour-intensive and that the staff of the NHS are as much a part of the revolution of rising expectation as any other part of our society. They expect to share in it, particularly as many of them began on relatively low pay compared with many of their peers in other occupations.

I draw attention to the proposals of the three institutes to which I have referred, which said of GDP growth:

"The proposal is intended to cover the normal year to year needs of the health service: it does not seek to provide an all encompassing solution to wider structural adjustments which may be needed to cover skill shortages, catch up settlements etc".

I shall not expand that thought, but merely leave it with my right hon. Friend. However, it is extremely important because nothing throws the finances of a district health authority more than when it suddenly discovers in the middle of its financial year that it must give big pay increases that have not been allowed for in the year's funding.

I also draw the attention of the House to that whole area of increased health care which we loosely call "care in the community." Many of us support that concept and want to see improved care in the community, but I cannot insist too strongly that it is not a cheap option, and anyone who thinks that it is has clearly not gone into the details of what is involved.

I wish to quote what the Select Committee said when it examined the proposition of care in the community in relation to the mentally ill and mentally handicapped, particularly with regard to the Government's continuing policy of closing down long-stay mental institutions. Paragraph 223 of the Select Committee report stated:

"We wholeheartedly support a policy of community care for mentally disabled people. It cannot be put into practice overnight. It cannot and must not be done on the cheap."

I could go further as there is a whole report along those lines, but that leads me to warn the House that if we are to satisfy expectation in community care we must put more resources into primary medical care. I draw the attention of the House to the report of the Select Committee on primary health care which was published in January. It contained 62 conclusions and recommendations, yet it has not been debated. However, I shall resist the temptation to describe that report, even though it is extremely good.

I merely draw attention to one point. Recommendation 12 stated:

"With an ageing population, earlier patient discharge from hospital—particularly of children, increasing opportunities for diagnosis in general practice to reduce referrals to hospital, as well as greater responsibility for the management of chronic disease in general practice and a greater emphasis on a range of preventive services, the case for further reduction in the GP list size seems unanswerable."

That is the key. We must have smaller lists for GPs. Much more can be done in general practice that does not need referral to hospital, just as, conversely, by the development of services, such as community physiotherapy, we give more relief and help to elderly people who do not have to suffer the burden of going to their district general hospital.

If we are to accept this new consensus, we must recognise that any exceptional crisis in health care and

health provision must be met by exceptional measures. In terms of money, that means going to the contingency fund, not the normal NHS budget. On that point I again draw attention to one of the Select Committee's latest reports, which came out three days before Dissolution and related to the problems associated with AIDS. I hope that there will be time in this Session of Parliament to debate that report. One paragraph in that report states:

"Obviously the Government has the lead role to play in responding to the challenge of AIDS -- and we are encouraged by its initial response. However even in these early days of the disease, we received evidence of under-resourcing which disturbed us and to which we have drawn attention. If the current estimates of the likely spread of the disease are in any way accurate, then the demand on resources will increase substantially and rapidly. In our view this rising demand must be met from new resources and not by diverting resources from other parts of the NHS or of the social services."

The challenge of AIDS is immensely humbling when we think of what we ought to be doing. In all this there is a basis for consensus which would be very much welcomed by all who work in and use the NHS.

Several Hon. Members rose —

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. A large number of hon. Members are still waiting to speak, some of whom to address the House for the first time. Unless speeches are shorter, many will be disappointed.

6.57 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): It has been interesting to note that since the Secretary of State's opening speech there have been four contributions from the Government Benches that have all been warning shots across the bows. The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) warned the Government about licensing. The former Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), and his hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon), said that more must be spent, especially on housing, and that we must beware of the divisive plans on education. Most recently, the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) said that more must be spent on social services. Those four speeches, plus a maiden speech, all warned the Government that they do not yet have agreement for the policies contained in the Gracious Speech.

Obviously, I join others in saluting the contributions of the three hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches — two from the Opposition Benches and one from the Conservative Benches. They all warned that in their new home territories all is not yet right. The hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) spoke of unemployment in rural Suffolk and the need to deal with it. The hon. Members for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) warned of the needs of areas in which Tories are not commonly found and of the difficulty, despite those needs, of getting the message across.

There is justified worry, because the Gracious Speech clearly states that the Government intend to cut public expenditure. If public expenditure is cut, the people who depend most on it — those who have the least private capital and wealth and who are by definition the most economically deprived — are likely to be hurt most. The people who rely for their opportunities on the public provision are the people who are most likely to suffer from the cuts.

If the Government were trying to be fair, to provide opportunities and to remove deprivation, they would not introduce the community charge, or poll tax, which obviously treats people, not according to their ability to pay, but according to a much more arbitrary measure. There are fair ways of reforming local fund raising and local services. The poll tax, or community charge, is not one of them.

If one wants to provide fairness, to remove deprivation, to increase opportunity and to provide a comprehensive employment service, one does not start by saying, "If you do not take the half-baked scheme that we have on offer, you will not get benefit at all." That is not the way to reward young people in constituencies such as mine who have been out of work for years. Nearly one in three adult males in Southwark and Bermondsey is without a job this month. They resent being told by a Government who received about one eighth of the vote in their constituency that they can have no income unless they are willing to take the only training scheme that may hold together.

With regard to education in London, it does not help to deal with inequalities and lack of opportunity if one says, "The affluent, or Tory, boroughs can opt out and leave the others with fewer funds to try to educate those who need education the most." That is not equality of treatment. That is not advancing the opportunities for people who start off at the bottom of the heap.

We do not know the details of the housing Bill, and the Government probably do not know them themselves. It appears that there are contradictory voices, and we shall have to await the outcome of the negotiations. However, it is not sufficient to say that private investment alone is the solution. The solution must be a partnership of support and it must meet the needs of those who are and will choose to remain tenants of local authorities.

It is not sufficient for the Government to say that they will continue to help the Health Service. The former Secretary of State for Social Services, who is on the Government Front Bench today in his new role as Secretary of State for Employment, knows that there have been real cuts in the Health Service. He and I debated this issue often during the election campaigning. They are not technical or academic cuts, but real cuts. There must be more public investment. The equation does not add up.

The policies in the Gracious Speech will not provide good opportunities for those who at the moment have least opportunities, and they will not remove deprivation. It was very galling to some of us to note that the Prime Minister was speaking after the end of the campaign as she spoke at the beginning of it. Deprivation and the denial of opportunity are not caused by defect of character. People in the inner cities, the north, Wales, Scotland and the areas that have suffered most do not lack character, resourcefulness or enterprise. They lack opportunity, services and often dignity, and respect from the Government.

We must ensure that opportunity is given for all to advance and that it is given most — this is the test of a good Government — to those who need it most. Opportunity must be individual and collective. There must be personal opportunity — financial opportunity and opportunity in housing, employment, health and education. But people also want a collective opportunity to share in decisions for their communities. They want to be able to mould their lives together. The imposition of

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solutions by agencies of the Government is not the way to share and to make the right decisions. The maximum democratic power should be at the bottom, not at the top.

Sadly, I believe that the Government, the Prime Minister and her Ministers do not understand, because they come from affluent constituencies, live affluent lives and are politically insulated. They may have looked at the problems, but they have not understood them, and sometimes they clearly are not motivated in the right way. The evidence is clear. The Prime Minister started her election campaign by going to the jewel in her crown, the docklands of London. She went in a bus and hardly stepped out of it. She saw what she wanted to see. She saw development, but she did not see that most of the new jobs were for outsiders, that many of the homes that were being built were second homes, and that many of the people who were out of work six years ago are still unemployed. The number of unemployed in those areas has increased. The number of firms training youngsters is smaller than it was, and the development is often not in the interests of people who need it most. There have been opportunities to plan for the revival of those communities, but the plans that have been carried out often allow for those communities to be exploited by those who start off with the most.

It was not surprising that the Prime Minister ended her campaign by talking about the inner cities. On that fateful night she stood on the steps of Tory Central Office in Smith Square and said:

"From Monday we have got a big job to do in those inner cities"

and then she smiled—

"because we want them, too, next time."

Britain's inner cities are not her inner cities. They are not the Government's inner cities, they are the people's inner cities, towns and country, and we must have a people's Government. If the Government do not heed the voices of their Back Benchers and the people outside in the areas that have not elected Conservative Members, they will leave this country with a legacy of division and inequality that will be worse than when the Prime Minister came to office.

The Prime Minister and her Ministers could realise that it would be better to end their term of Toryism in good faith. They could make sure that the pattern of employment and training allows, with the right investment, for real jobs to be created and real training to be given. They could ensure that housing was not only repaired in the public sector, by releasing capital receipts, but was developed and managed in a more appropriate way. They could realise the inadequacy of the public services and do something to ease the strain on the social services, transport services and the Health Service. They could remove the feelings of alienation that many people still have.

Why should people move from their communities and look elsewhere for work? Why should families have to be broken up because there is nowhere locally for them to live? Why should families be trapped in poor housing while they watch other people's luxury housing being built nearby? Why should that inequality continue? It is no good my constituents asking whether I can give them the list of new housing developments in their borough when the prices of some of the houses are £500,000 or £1 million. These are not acceptable developments when people are

living in damp, poor, overcrowded and unsatisfactory conditions. I hope that this belief in the regenerating magic of the urban development corporation, or another quango or new agencies, is not deceiving the Government.

I have two examples of such a mistaken belief. A year ago the Government set up task forces in the inner cities. They set up one in Southwark and another in Kensington and Chelsea. One year later, the Southwark task force having spent only £100,000 out of its allocation of £1 million, a Southwark council spokesman said:

"All we've seen is a couple of civil servants being put into an office above the local McDonalds. Now one administrator has taken long-term leave because of the stress, and contracts have been delayed by bureaucratic muddles."

In Kensington and Chelsea, hardly an Opposition stronghold, the Conservative leader of the council, where also only £100,000 of the £1 million has been spent, said:

"I would be surprised if it was any more. They haven't done very much here in their first year."

Three things are needed: first, investment, not cutting back, so that the common wealth can be shared for the common good and not exploited for the few. Secondly, we need a response to local needs. Region by region, nation by nation, community activities and priorities are different and they must be allowed those differences. Power has to be given away by this all-consuming Government, who want to do everything themselves, believing that they know best. Thirdly, we need conciliation and humility. There must be an attempt to narrow social divides in health, wealth and education. We must not widen them.

When the Prime Minister quotes the Bible, as she often does, she should remember that the teaching of Jesus was that people were judged by what was done to the least of his brethren. This Government must be judged, not by how rich the rich become or how affluent the already adequately well off become, but by how well off after another Tory term those with the less strong voices and the less fat pockets become. That is the judgment of compassion. The economic policy outlined in the Queen's Speech does not suggest that the Conservative Government, even after eight years, have begun to understand.

7.11 pm

Mr. Julian Critchley (Aldershot): Nearly 30 years ago, in the debate on the Address that followed Harold Macmillan's greatest victory of October 1959, Nye Bevan warned the packed Tory Benches that we were faced with hours and hours of infinite boredom. My God, he was right. We still are. It will not be long before we Back Benchers, especially those elected for the first time, will ask ourselves what on earth we are doing. Is Westminster, we shall complain, anything more than an echo chamber with knobs on?

We should not feel sorry for ourselves. The newly elected have arrived without qualifications of any kind. It is, after all, open to any British subject over the age of 21 to apply for membership of the House.

The 1922 Committee has never in my time included peers, clergymen, bankrupts or certified lunatics. What then is to be our fate? The hours are unending; the rewards, if the Prime Minister has her way—she usually does—will be meagre, and the job security non-existent. Welcome to the best club in London.

If the newly elected Member ever wonders where the power lies, I can let him know: it is not with him. Power for an hon. Member does not lie in choosing the Executive.

Ministers are promoted on the whim of the Prime Minister from a list of the deserving provided by the Government Chief Whip. Power does not lie in the Back Benchers formulating legislation. We can amend it if we are persistent or fortunate, but Government legislation is by the manifesto out of the Civil Service which is responsible for its drafting. Power does not really lie in dismissing the Executive, for if we were to do so the roof of the temple would fall upon our heads. In truth, we are without power, save the power to make mischief. That is one thing that we can do. We can expose the shortcomings of Ministers and in that necessary activity we shall be aided and abetted by the press. It is a task that can be as much a pleasure as a duty.

Of course, the making of mischief by Back Benchers — I see that the chairman of the 1922 Committee has hurried from an early dinner to join us — is in conflict with the desire of the party Whips. "Stop rockin' the boat" has been the cry of the Whips throughout the ages. For them, the only function of a Tory Back Benchers is to sustain the Government in office.

To help us make mischief, we have a couple of weapons. One is the Select Committee, the reports of which can make the most arrogant Minister tremble at the knees. We should thank Norman St. John Stevas who, if there is any justice in an imperfect world, should soon be sitting at the feet of the Lord Chancellor eating bread and butter pudding.

The second weapon could be the television cameras. If we were clever enough to bring them into the Chamber, we the disregarded, or even the deprived, would have a weapon at our disposal which would bring fear into the hearts of our masters. The nation might not be watching, but no one, whether Minister or bureaucrat, could ever be certain of that.

This is a debate on the Queen's Speech. The speech was based upon the party manifesto. In an ideal world, manifestos should be treated like menus — we should choose only from the à la carte. I am certainly overfaced by ours. Listening to it in the House of Lords last week — so familiar in content, so unfamiliar in delivery — I wondered whatever happened to the Conservative party that I knew and loved. We have changed almost out of recognition. Instead of the party of continuity and careful change, it has become the party of reconstruction and radical change. Why not have done with it and change its name — to the Radical and Once-Unionist Party?

After our election victory, the Prime Minister raised three fingers to the nation — one for each of her election victories. We, stranded way up on the back of the Government Benches — Government Back Benchers have long been regarded as the lowest form of political life — should now raise two fingers to the great and the good. That is unless all we want from life is junior office or four more years of infinite boredom.

7.18 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): It is very difficult to follow the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley), but I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to make my maiden speech. I was getting worried and also suffering from kidney problems, having sat in the Chamber since 2.30 pm.

I want to thank the people of the City of Durham, and in particular my party workers, who together by their efforts elected me to the House of Commons. It is a great honour to be able to make my maiden speech this evening.

The City of Durham result was very pleasing, because since 1983 we have been told that the City of Durham was one of the most winnable seats for the SDP. That suggestion has now been shown to be a fallacy.

At this stage I wish to pay tribute to my predecessor, Dr. Mark Hughes, who represented a Durham constituency for 17 years. I say "a Durham constituency" because during that time the boundaries were altered on a number of occasions. I have known Mark Hughes for many years, as I acted as his agent from 1973 until 1983. Mark is a very able person. He was an academic who gave up a flourishing university career to become a politician. Both Mark and I served as district councillors on the same local authority, although obviously at different times. We were both nominated for our parliamentary candidatures by the same Labour party branch — Sherburn and district.

Over the years, Mark's contribution has included being a member of the Select Committee on Expenditure Trade and Industry Sub-Committee from 1970 to 1974 when he became Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. In 1975 he became a Member of the European Parliament. He held the dual role of being a Member of both the European and British Parliaments until 1979. In 1980 Mark became a Front Bench spokesman on agriculture, a post that he held until 1983 and which was of great interest to him. He was also a vice-chairman of the British Council.

As one can see, Mark had an interesting and varied career and will be a great loss to his colleagues and ex-constituents. Mark has been ill recently and I hope that he soon recovers to full fitness. On behalf of myself and, I am sure, the whole House, I should like to give him our best wishes for the future.

In this my maiden speech, I should like to direct hon. Members' attention to my constituency — City of Durham. I am extremely fortunate to represent such a constituency, which is perhaps the most beautiful in the entire country. We have a magnificent cathedral, which was voted the best architectural building in the world, and a magnificent castle. Indeed, the city could be described as the jewel in the crown of the north of England. The view when one crosses the railway viaduct coming north is breathtaking.

In many cases, after going to public schools the children of Cabinet Ministers have ended up at Durham university which is a truly magnificent university. It is historically a seat of learning, spanning the centuries, and continues to be a centre of academic excellence. Incidentally, at the moment it is suffering badly because of scant resources.

Durham is a tourist attraction, and millions come each year to see our beautiful city — and rightly so. As can be seen, I am proud of my city and should like to draw our three excellent golf courses to the attention of the Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley).

However, what the Cabinet Ministers' children and the tourists do not see are the problems that we have in the City of Durham. Most people see the inner city and make their judgment of the City of Durham on that. Many of the villages that surround the inner city do not share the same affluence or splendour as the city itself. In some areas

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of Durham, we have pockets of unemployment of more than 40 per cent. There are young people who left school at 16, who are now married and have children of their own, who have never worked—not because they are lazy, but because there are no jobs for them. Their enthusiasm and optimism have been wasted on the dole queues and in youth training schemes. Those young people should be contributing so much to our society, but their value is not being recognised. An entire generation of young people in my constituency has never known what it is to have a steady job and to be able to provide a good home in which they can be good parents to their children.

The position in Durham is made worse by the loss of our assisted area status, and urban aid or being classed as a special development area. Our problems in Durham increase, but we are hampered in our efforts to attract industry to the area.

Our mining industry has been devastated and Durham's ~~once~~ famous coalfield is no longer there. The last three collieries, Bearpark, Kelloe and Sacriston, were closed during the last parliamentary Session. That was the end of an era, but there is nothing on the horizon. However, what we have left is the waste and dereliction where the collieries stood, and because of the lack of funds the possibility of transforming those areas into vibrant industrial sites where jobs could be created is, indeed, remote.

Our countryside is further ravaged by the unnecessary increase of opencast mining. The severe impact on the environment cannot be justified, especially when there is a considerable decrease in the demand for coal and the deep pits can produce as cheaply as the opencast mines. Since 1983 the Government have abandoned a target for opencast coal output and left it to be generally determined by the market. Consequently, more pits will close and there will be further job losses in my constituency for those miners who now travel to pits outside the constituency.

After listening most intently to the Queen's Speech, I fear that there is no hope for the north and Durham in particular. I looked in the records to see I could find an appropriate quotation and stumbled upon one made by Winston Churchill—a leader who I know this House holds in great esteem—who has been widely quoted during this last week, and as recently as this afternoon. He said:

"We know what to expect when the Tories return to power, a party of great vested interest, banded together in a formidable confederation. Corruption at home, aggression to cover it abroad: the trickery of tariff juggles, the tyranny of a wealth-fed party machine. Patriotism by the bucketful and imperialism by the imperial pint. An open hand at the public exchequer, an open door at the public house. Dear food for millions and cheap labour for the millionaire. That is the policy the Tory party offers you".

Has anything changed since those enlightened words were spoken over 80 years ago?

Local government has been under serious attack and this attack continues. Durham city council and Durham county council, like many other Labour caring local authorities, have struggled to maintain their services. They have seen their rate support grant severely cut and their capital allocations diminish. Cumulatively they have lost staggering amounts of resources.

That has had a dramatic effect on the services provided. Before 1979 Durham city council had a thriving house-building programme. Now it builds virtually no new housing. Its total new build will be 12 bungalows for aged persons, and that will dry up unless more money is made available. Currently there are 3,200 people on the housing waiting lists. That is treble the figure of five years ago. Homelessness has doubled over the same period. One third of those on the lists are single persons and the council has a chronic shortage of houses for the elderly. Over 75 per cent. of the applicants have been on the lists for over one year and in some places for nearly five years.

All the evidence from the Audit Commission and the tenants themselves suggests that Durham is a well-managed, efficient housing authority, giving a good service and good value for money, yet the council is still being penalised. Despite that and with other housing problems—£66 million is needed for housing repairs—housing finance seems certain to be cut again next year and more jobs will be threatened.

In the private sector, some of Durham's older houses are deteriorating faster than its repairs and improvement policy will remedy. The council cannot renovate its older council houses as quickly as it needs to do so. Many are below current standards of repair and facilities and have become difficult to let. Durham's housing conditions and problems are increasing, whereas the money available to remedy those problems is reducing. Short-term economies are producing serious and adverse long-term effects.

I have lived in Durham for most of my life and, like many others, I want to stay in Durham. From the late 1960s the city's population saw a steady growth but since the early 1980s its population has started to fall. It is almost certain that most who are leaving are from the younger, better skilled sectors of the population. That increases the problems of support services and the rate of decline of Durham's economy. Unemployment is at the root of deprivation and it is not surprising that those areas in Durham with dreadful unemployment are also the areas with great deprivation.

Last year a report published by the Northern regional health authority and the university of Bristol highlighted the close relationship between people's health and the deprivation that people experience in their daily lives. It highlighted also the north-south divide, even in the health of the population. I mention this report specifically because in my constituency the village of New Brancepeth was the fifth worst ward in the whole of the northern region. The report found that the areas of highest mortality and morbidity were overwhelmingly in the north, the north-east, Scotland and Wales and were almost entirely absent from the south, except for one or two areas of inner London.

As a northern Member of Parliament whose constituency is directly involved I must say that the time has come for the north of England and Durham to be treated on a par with the south. The divide must be halted. The people of Durham, the north, Scotland and Wales—all areas which have been neglected—have shown the Government through the ballot box that enough is enough. We want equal treatment, jobs, and resources for better housing and health care. The Queen's Speech does not give me or my constituents any hope for a better future. Unless the Government begin to realise that there is a divide and unless they take steps to halt the increasing

anomalies, they will be remembered not as the Government of the United Kingdom, but as the Government of the divided kingdom.

I remind hon. Members that I represent a beautiful constituency, but behind the affluence there is misery, grief and suffering. I implore the Government to take steps that will eradicate the feeling of hopelessness of so many of my constituents and to make a start by appointing a Minister for the north and giving the young and their families a chance, because, if they do not, they will never be forgiven.

7.30 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I join with all hon. Members in congratulating the new hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) on following the tradition of a barbed, non-controversial speech. I made a non-controversial maiden speech, speaking up for my constituents in Birmingham. However non-controversial we intend to be, we all speak for our people and the hon. Gentleman followed that proper pursuit.

Those of us who have the great good fortune to know Mark Hughes, the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, warmly welcome the kind remarks that the hon. Gentleman made about him. As has been said before, our opponents are in front of us and our enemies behind us. Mark Hughes was an opponent and a friend and the hon. Gentleman's good views of him are held by many of us.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) seemed to use against the Prime Minister the fact that on that early morning after a great victory, her first words were about the inner cities. I had just returned home at 3.21 am after treading the streets, as we all had. I remember the occasion well because it surprised and pleased me that her first thoughts after her great victory were for the inner cities. I do not think that it was a cynical view, as the hon. Gentleman said; I think that the Prime Minister recognised it was sad that after a great victory the governing party had no representatives in Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds or Liverpool. Indeed it is sad, because the governing party governs for all people. It is to the Prime Minister's great credit that, after a long, tiring campaign, the first views she expressed were about the country's needs and that she would do something about the inner cities where the problems are great, as those of us who represent great cities and problem areas know.

Exhortation, like patriotism, is not enough. We need a lead from the top and it is of profound importance that the lead on the inner cities will come from the Prime Minister, heading a Cabinet Committee which will deal with our inner-city problems. Anybody who comes from cities such as Birmingham, as I do, knows that over the years there has been decay in the cities that were built in the age of Victoria, even if industry has been increasing and improving. In the age of Thatcher, we must do something to ensure that that decay is reversed. Many of us who heard her words will be happy to help her and to ensure that those fine words are made into fine deeds.

As a member of the majority party, I like the community charge, or poll tax, whichever one cares to call it. In a 77-page manifesto, it was made clear that there was a need for change and so there is. There is injustice in the present rating system. But my Government must ensure that we do not replace an unjust system with another system which may be even more unjust. Nor is it any good merely saying that this system is unjust. It is. It is nonsense

that a widow with a dependent family pays exactly the same property tax as a neighbouring family with four or five income earners. To say that it is unjust is only to state the obvious. If we are to say that sweeping it away will bring justice, we must recognise that this is not a children's tea party. I think that people voted thinking that somehow, like a children's tea party, we could all have prizes. We cannot. As an individual I shall gain about £2,500 a year. With my sad problems that is good news; I need it. I suffer, but if I gain, someone else must lose. We must ask whether the winners and the losers enjoy the same just relationship.

John Gibson of Birmingham university's institute of local government, for which I have great regard having worked with it for many years, says—he may be wrong—that 8.3 million people could be worse off. It is important, particularly when we have won another great victory, to talk about justice. We cannot raise the £26 billion and more painlessly. The rating system was not devised to raise that sort of money alone; it was meant to be a type of poor law reform, repairing a few roads and potholes.

At present, the rating system is not entirely fair, but let us ensure that when we sweep it away, or people suggest we do, we replace it with a more just system. People may say, "Let's get rid of it because we hate it," but that does not mean that they will not hate the replacement even more. How will it work? According to the Herod principle, with everyone going home on new year's eve to their village to be counted and to pay taxes? Are we to have a system which will result in people becoming gipsies, every three months moving to a different town to ensure that they are not counted? The rating system is bad and it costs 2.5 per cent. of the rates to collect. A poll tax system may cost 7 per cent. or 10 per cent. to collect, so we shall need to raise a further £2,000 million to be where we are now, from where we wish we had never started.

We talk about change and I believe that we need change. But I say to the Government with the greatest friendliness in the world, particularly at the start of a new Parliament, having suffered since 1979 one outrageous fortune after another because of one local government Bill after another and having spent 22 years in local government and eight years as chairman of finance authorities of the great city of Birmingham and the west midlands: "Do not think that by brushing it to one side you will solve the problem. You will not." The money must be found. Local government and the needs of people have so moved on over the years that we are now talking about £30,000 million. It comes either from national taxation or from local taxation, but unless it comes only from inflation and from printing money, one way or another it will come from people's pockets.

The Government should not dispense easily with the rating system. Property tax has a basis of fairness and logic. If it is right to give mortgage tax relief to people who buy their homes—I believe that it is, because no one makes a better investment than buying his own home—we should think carefully before abolishing a property tax and replacing it with a poll tax or a community charge. We need various threads to bring finances into the land, and property tax is a just tax. Those of us who own good homes should be willing to be taxed upon those homes as well. I concede that the Government should set a business

[Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark]

tax, as long as it is fairly based upon the local area and is not just a national mish-mash because some civil servant thinks that that is a better system.

Let the Government fix a local rating tax and let us have a community charge, too, so that local authorities will be responsible. But we should not think that because, some years ago, the Prime Minister thought on the spur of the moment—perhaps it was not quite on the spur of the moment—“Let us do away with rates,” we now have to do so. We must bear in mind the hopes of the people of Britain and their future and we must try to help individuals. Bearing in mind the fact that time moves on, to say that one was wrong does not mean that one was venal. To say that we should change our views shows statesmanship, not weakness. Let us make sure that, before we take such a giant step, that step is for the better and not into the darkness that might bring more unhappiness than benefits to our people.

7.42 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I pay tribute to the eloquent maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) and to the equally eloquent maiden speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). All of them will make a major contribution to our debates.

There is no doubt that we are in for some controversial legislation which the Opposition will fight every inch of the way. But that will not include agreed measures against crime. One of the most controversial Bills will be the one on the poll tax. No amount of name changing and calling it a community charge can hide the fact that it is a blatant poll tax that will be levied on all, regardless of income.

I accept that the centuries-old rating system has many defects. I was a member of the Select Committee on the Environment in the 1979 Parliament which inquired fully into alternative systems of local revenue-raising. The Committee found that every alternative, including a local income tax, was worse than what we already had. We considered a poll tax, but it was rejected decisively by the Conservative majority on the Select Committee, as well as by the Labour Members, of course. Millions of householders would lose if such a tax was introduced. That is why it will be strongly opposed at every stage by Labour Members.

However, it is interesting to see—as in the comments of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark)—the beginnings of some concern among Conservative Members about what the Government intend to do. At least those Conservative Members, including the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) in his speech last night, are beginning to realise the possible effects of a poll tax and the sheer injustice whereby the most prosperous will undoubtedly gain and the losers will be people on modest incomes.

Despite the Government's majority of over 100, if there is sufficient concern on the Government Benches and a willingness among Conservative Members such as the hon. Member for Selly Oak to join us in the Division Lobby, we can defeat a poll tax even in this Parliament. I hope that it will not be just rhetoric from the Conservative Members

who understand the injustice of a poll tax but that they will show their concern by coming into the Division Lobby with us.

A subject that has concerned me since I have been in politics and which indeed was the subject of my own maiden speech all those years ago, is the need for adequate housing for all our people. It is sheer Tory mischief-making, as we all know, to say that the Labour party opposes owner-occupation. Far from it. Indeed, a Labour Administration introduced the option mortgage scheme and other assistance for those with modest incomes to buy their own places. For the majority of our people, owner-occupation is the solution to their housing needs, and it was always expected—not least by me—that this would become the case in Britain.

However, we are left with a sizeable number of people who cannot purchase their own homes, and there is no reason why they should be denied adequate housing because of their low or modest incomes. The Government have pursued policies that have made it almost financially impossible for local authorities to carry out their responsibility to build accommodation. My own borough of Walsall in the black country, whether Labour or anti-Labour-controlled at various times, has not had the means to carry out any house building during the past eight years. That is true of countless councils, and it has produced a great deal of housing hardship and misery.

Since 1979, capital spending nationally on council house building and on major repairs has been reduced by about 60 per cent. In human terms, it means that young couples, like many of my constituents, have little chance of getting a place to live. Even families with two children have to wait now for years in a multi-storey block of flats before being offered a house. Thousands of families, in London for example, live in squalid bed-and-breakfast hostels which should shame our country. It costs about £50 million a year to provide such bed-and-breakfast accommodation in London alone. In addition, essential repair work is being delayed on older council properties because the local authorities lack sufficient capital.

May I give an example of constituents who live in what are known as Wimpey no-fines properties—concrete properties built just after the second world war—in the Blakenall area of Walsall within my constituency. They are extremely worried about acute dampness and condensation, and the local authority agrees that the work should be undertaken as quickly as possible, but it simply does not have the money to carry out the work. The residents are so fearful that they will have to spend another winter in such conditions that they are coming to London on 22 July to see a Minister at the Department of the Environment. I hope that a Minister will see them. Only today, I reminded the Minister of Housing by letter that my constituents will be coming to his Department in London and that I shall be accompanying the deputation. It would be unforgivable if, having travelled more than 100 miles and made financial arrangements to hire a coach and so on, my constituents were snubbed.

The Government apparently accept that there is a need for rented accommodation, although I suspect that they sharply underestimate the numbers who require dwellings to rent. The main, important difference between the Government and the Opposition is that the Government believe that the shortfall in rented accommodation should be provided by the private sector through charging market rents. We totally reject that solution.

The Government's proposals are to provide new lettings—they emphasise new, rented lettings—to be let at what landlords consider to be these market rents. In those circumstances, I understand, security of tenure may be retained. At the moment it is rather difficult to understand precisely the Government's proposals and obviously we shall have to wait for the Bill. However, a free market in rent levels totally undermines security of tenure. What use is security of tenure to a private tenant if the landlord or the property company, as the case may be, offers a new agreement on a rent that the tenant cannot possibly afford?

Ministers dismiss our concern about the revival of *Rachmanism*. They say that we exaggerate and that there is no chance that *Rachmanism* will come back. They point out that existing tenants will not be affected by any new legislation. *Rachmanism* came about, however, precisely because of previous attempts by the Tory Government to change the privately rented sector. The Rent Act 1957 came onto the statute book to deregulate a large amount of private rented dwellings. *Rachmanism*, *alsatian dogs* and the rest of it came about because those totally unscrupulous landlords wanted to ensure that sitting protected tenants were forced out. Once that tenant and his family were forced out, the letting could be re-let without any control, regulation or security of tenure. Ministers described the Rent Act 1957 as a measure that would increase the amount of rented accommodation. That was the justification for the Act and much was made of that fact.

On 21 November 1956 when Enoch Powell — no longer with us — was a junior Housing Minister, he piloted the Rent Bill through the House and said:

"It will halt the drain upon rented accommodation, it will release additional accommodation which is under-used or wasted, it will arrest the deterioration of millions of houses for lack of maintenance, and it will give to persons who are moving or setting up home the opportunity to find accommodation in the market." — [*Official Report*, 21 November 1956, Vol. 560, c. 1775]

Almost exactly the same words are now being used again by Tory Ministers. That legislation, apart from bringing in *Rachmanism*, led to a substantial reduction in privately rented properties. More than 1.5 million rented dwellings left the market completely largely as a result of the 1957 Act. Why should we believe that there will be any difference now if the Government's wishes are put into force?

As regards market rents, the House Builders Federation — I mentioned this in an intervention on a speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) — points out that in some parts of Britain the market rent would amount to £90 a week. It also points out that that figure compares with the average £80 a week that many owner-occupiers repay on mortgages. Those people for whom we are so concerned, those in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and so many others including many of our constituents who are unable to buy a house simply because they do not have the means, but who desperately need somewhere decent to live and who are on the waiting lists, will not be in a position to pay £90 a week, or anything near it, for rented accommodation.

It is obvious that the measures that the Government have in mind will in no way resolve the serious housing problem faced by hundreds of thousands of people in this country whose only crime is that they have an inadequate

income to buy a place of their own. For that reason we are concerned about the Government's measures. We have the same concern about the Government's various, vague, but rather obnoxious proposals to encourage existing council tenants to opt out of local authority ownership. The idea that private landlords will come in and carry out the work that is so essential in so many places, be good landlords and act as philanthropists belongs to fairy-fairy land. We all know that to be the case.

If council tenants are given an option, as the Government promise, we will do our utmost to ensure that they decide to stay as tenants of the local authorities. Indeed, they have every reason to continue as such.

I have no doubt that the poll tax, housing, local government services and related matters will dominate this Parliament. During the next five years I am sure that, time and time again, we shall return to those issues. As I said earlier, I hope that if Conservative Members share our concern, certainly about the poll tax, they will demonstrate it in the Division Lobby.

I certainly hope that, by the end of this Parliament, the Labour party will be able to convince the majority of the people to return a different type of Government. We shall do our utmost to ensure that in the next Parliament there is a Labour Government who will be deeply concerned about the problems that I have described and will act accordingly to resolve them.

7.55 pm

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): With respect to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), I must confess that I expected to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock). I may not agree with her thesis, but she certainly distinguished herself before entering this House. I was thwarted in the enterprise because some of my colleagues left the Chamber, possibly following the revelation from my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) that, as Back Benchers, there was no point in them being here.

I must disappoint the hon. Member for Walsall, North because I do not intend to indulge in rhetoric against the community charge, or to attack it. The subject of today's debate is inequality of opportunity. I must assume from the negative contained in the title that the subject was chosen by the Labour party. The Conservatives deal in positives. We believe in seeking ways to increase available opportunities for everyone instead of threatening to try to reduce the opportunities of a few in the misguided belief that that will help the rest.

Complaining about our record on equality comes extremely ill from a party that, over the years, has destroyed so many opportunities. The House will remember which Government destroyed the grammar schools and caused the disastrous levelling down of education standards and the demoralisation of secondary education in many parts of the country. The House will remember which party supported the activities of union wreckers over the years. It will remember who allowed our manufacturing industries to be strangled by restrictive practices and lack of competitiveness and who made British industry famous all over the world for strikes. History will judge how many jobs were lost for ever, especially in the north of England and in my constituency, as a direct result of those actions.

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

The situation has now improved out of all recognition. It is sad to note that the Labour party is committed to repeal all our industrial relations legislation that has given rise to this extraordinary improvement. Millions of former council tenants will not forget that the Labour party did its best to prevent them from acquiring the dignity of owning their own homes and taking them out from under the mercy of local housing departments. Those departments were often incompetent or unwilling to maintain their properties.

Equality of opportunity — whether that means equality of access to adequate health, education or other services or whether it means the supply of good, well-paid jobs — cannot be delivered by Governments fiddling around with the benefit or tax system or attempting to reform our institutions. It can come only as a result of continued economic growth. There is no way that the demands on the public services, especially health, can be met without an expanding tax base from an expanding economy. No company will plan to take on more employees unless it has a reasonable expectation that its business will grow.

Jobs result from decisions by companies to invest and to take on more employees. It is now axiomatic that companies work in an international environment. Companies will not take investment decisions in any country unless they can see a favourable political and economic climate. After eight years of Conservative government, we have that climate. That means low inflation, monetary controls, a stable currency and, perhaps most important of all, a radical improvement in industrial relations.

The economic portents at the time of the Queen's Speech are good. We have increasing tax revenues, despite the decline in the price of North sea oil, and falling corporate and personal income tax rates. We have the expectation of continued growth and low inflation, combined with mounting international interest in investing in this country. Best of all, we have the most confident predictions for years of a continued fall in unemployment.

The measures in the Queen's Speech, particularly those on industrial relations, further privatisation and a reduction in tax rates, will build on all those favourable developments.

But what do we hear from the Labour party? We hear of plans to nationalise or renationalise major companies, whatever words Labour Members may use to dress it up, in spite of all the evidence of 40 years that it can lead only to a disastrous waste of financial and human resources, loss of markets and further unemployment.

We hear of plans to repeal employment legislation, which can only result in a return to strikes, restrictive practices and mob rule. We hear of spending plans that would involve huge increases in personal taxation, eroding the incentive to work for many people and rendering many others unable to afford to go out to work at all.

What amazes me—I am sure that I am not alone in this—is that many Labour Members, particularly some of those who sit on the Front Bench from time to time, are go-ahead people who, in other walks of life, would make a real contribution to some aspect of our national life. But what do they do? We see them pushing out tired old ideas, so utterly reactionary that they are no longer taken

seriously by anyone who takes even a passing intelligent interest in the world of politics or business. Attitudes have moved on, but the Labour party stays rooted in the attitudes of the 1930s. It fails to recognise that the British work force will no longer be pushed around by the likes of Arthur Scargill. Labour Members forget that people want to own their own houses, their own pensions and shares in the companies for which they work.

They ignore the fact that ordinary people have ceased to trust Governments and local authorities to take a huge proportion of their hard-earned income in taxes and rates to spend, or rather mis-spend, on their behalf. They seem unaware that people now want more control over their own lives, not to be controlled by politicians and civil servants. They seem unable to grasp the fact that new jobs do not come in any economy where Governments interfere in the workplace or the market place.

Opposition Members now speak for and appeal to an ever-declining constituency, consisting of a tiny minority of people who still believe in the Socialist nonsense, despite all the evidence of its destructive effects over the years. That constituency also includes many of the low-paid or unemployed, who may have been conned into feeling that a Socialist Government would have something to offer them personally, and those who have never broken the habit of a lifetime of voting Labour.

The British electorate proved in the recent election that it will have no truck with Socialism or any other reactionary policies that seek to take Britain back to the 1930s. The Labour party presented a campaign aimed at exploiting envy and class hatred, and it failed utterly. The Queen's Speech is further proof that the people have re-elected a party, a Government, with a radical programme dedicated to dragging this country away from the prejudices and errors of the past and into the 21st century, with the confidence that everyone who wants to do so can share in the social improvement and greater prosperity for which the past eight years have laid the foundations.

8.5 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I am pleased to have the opportunity of addressing the House in this, the first, debate of the new parliamentary Session.

It is the custom for new Members to pay tribute to their predecessors, and I do so willingly. Bernard Conlan, who represented Gateshead, East for 23 years, was a personal friend. His efforts in the constituency were much appreciated, particularly the work that he did in supporting the local power, engineering and shipbuilding-related industries in their quest for ever-elusive orders and new customers. In all his efforts in the constituency he was concerned to ensure that our high unemployment did not become worse. During his career Bernard Conlan was an active trade unionist and had an ideal of co-operation in industrial relations, which, unfortunately, in the present climate of hostility towards trade unions, seems a far-off vision.

In speaking of my predecessor, I should also like to express my appreciation of the help and advice that he was always prepared to give me, both in my capacity as a Member of the European Parliament for Tyne and Wear, and more recently in my role as prospective parliamentary candidate in Gateshead, East.

In his maiden speech my predecessor referred to the fact that unemployment in the Gateshead, East constituency was considerably higher than the national average. He also

lamented the fact that insufficient diversification of the local industrial base had taken place. It is a tragedy that 23 years after he made that speech, unemployment in Gateshead, East is now three times higher than it was then and that the hoped-for diversification has not taken place.

The north-east of England as a whole has fewer small businesses as a proportion of regional economic activity than any other British region. We are all too well aware of the distressing tendency of the new technological industries to concentrate in the already prosperous parts of southern England rather than in the areas where they are needed most.

How to deal with the regional imbalances is the most pressing problem that we face, yet one of the glaring omissions from the Gracious Speech is the mention of any regional policy worthy of the name. Opposition Members from Scotland have spoken eloquently of the political frustration felt there, arising from the unpopularity of the Government's policies. I understand their point of view, but it should also be said that there is real sense of anger in areas such as mine in the north-east that people in the better-off regions simply do not care about the unemployment and poverty that many people in our region face.

It is true that the Prime Minister made a fleeting visit to the north-east during the election campaign. She visited the fine new Metro shopping centre on Tyneside, and that seems to have been one of the highlights of her campaign. I wondered whether, as a result, she would abandon her belief in market forces and instead take up a belief in supermarket forces, but the point that I should like to make strongly is that we want to produce more of the goods that are sold in our supermarkets.

In the northern region, we feel that we are being squeezed into our corner of England and that we have virtually no ways open to us of exercising some control over our economic and political future. I should like to see measures of devolution introduced for all the regions of the United Kingdom that want it. In the north, that would mean a regional assembly as well as a development agency with a large budget and adequate economic powers. I noted that in his speech in the debate yesterday the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) referred to the need for an English development agency, but, from my point of view, what is needed is not an English development agency, but an agency for those areas of England that most need the jobs and potential that can be developed for the future.

Being in the European Parliament has shown me that we are in danger of becoming one of the most centralised countries in Western Europe—a clear contrast with the position in West Germany, for example, where two good things happen. First, the regions are allowed economic and political powers of their own, and, secondly, their efforts are backed up by a federal policy of positive discrimination in favour of the least prosperous areas.

In addition to the lack of regional devolution, we are faced with what seems to be a never-ending curtailment of the powers of local authorities. I know that many speakers in the debate have referred to that eloquently. Today's theme is lack of opportunity and deprivation, and that is obviously linked with the regional situation that I have described. If one lives in the northern region, one's chances of finding a job are limited. In fact, one would need to move a minimum of 150 miles away to find oneself in an area with an increased chance of finding new employment.

That is tragic, and so is the fact that the northern region is an area of net outward migration, despite the fact that we live in a small island, with more and more of our resources, people and wealth concentrated into one small corner of it.

The lack of opportunity and the sense of deprivation is certainly real in my part of Britain, and the claim that was made during the general election campaign that Britain is booming and that people generally are experiencing a higher standard of living seems like a cruel taunt to the many whose experience is quite the reverse. The prospects for Gateshead and the north-east, if the proposals in the Gracious Speech go ahead, look bleak. Yet areas such as Tyneside pioneered our industrial revolution and could do a great deal again if the conditions were right.

A century ago one of the residents in what is now the constituency of Gateshead, East was Joseph Wilson Swan, who, together with the American Edison, is credited with the discovery of the incandescent electric light. Swan's house in Gateshead was the first in Britain to be lit by electricity, and through his invention he gave the whole of Britain a brighter future. I should like to think that the Government will take action to ensure that Gateshead and our other deprived areas have a brighter future in their turn, but it will certainly need a dramatic change of approach from that in the proposals that were outlined in the Gracious Speech if such a desirable result is to become a reality.

8.14 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaugh): It gives me pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quinn), whom I have known for some time in her capacity as an MEP for our region in the north-east. She has made an excellent start in her contribution and I hope that I shall have the opportunity of hearing her often in the future. We shall disagree fundamentally in many ideological ways, but I believe that she is a good Member of Parliament and has started with an excellent speech. I also want to be associated with her remarks about Bernard Conlan, whom I also regarded as a friend. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) said earlier, we have opponents in the Opposition who can be friends and not always enemies. We shall also miss Bernard Conlan's contributions to this House over many years.

That said, I listened to the hon. Lady's speech and wondered whether it was about the same region of England as that which I represent. Of course, the Conservatives won more additional seats in the north-east than the Labour party this time. I now have as an hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) in a constituency adjacent to mine, and that is more than we had in the last Parliament. I hear all the gloom and doom and pour-more-money-down-the-drain remarks, and I wonder whether the hon. Lady has been to the Nissan factory yet to see what has happened as a consequence of the work that we have done to bring it to the north-east of England. Perhaps she should reflect that it is there, it is successful, and for one reason: it has a single union operation.

Another reason why we have problems in the north-east of England is the stranglehold that the unions have had on that part of the country for far too long. Where else in the world would one find shipyards in which a ship is being repaired, another ship is lying off waiting to come in, and

[Mr. Richard Holt]

the following happens: the men are told that if they go on strike they will lose the order of the ship that is lying off outside the river Wear and is now waiting to come in? What did the men in Sunderland do? They went on strike, as a result of which they lost the additional work and created the sort of atmosphere in the north-east that drives would-be entrepreneurs and business people away from the area.

Cleveland has been in the public eye during the past two or three days because of a matter that I do not wish to dwell upon in this speech. However, it does not help our cause in the north-east — to improve the lot of the people — if we are saddled with the sort of millstones that have resulted from the activities of the Cleveland county council social services department and the stranglehold that the unions have in the north-east. The Prime Minister was right to say that we must attack the problems of the inner cities. She has also said that we must seek to eradicate Socialism from this country. The last area in which it seems to thrive now — although it is dying rapidly — is the north-east of England. Once we have eradicated that bedrock of Socialism, which is endemic in society there, we will have the same opportunities for our people as exist in the rest of the United Kingdom. There will not be the bleating that we hear about the north-south divide, because everything that is good will exist in the north-east as well.

Nevertheless, the Government have a role to play and they had better listen to some of the voices of Conservative Members from the north-east in this context. It is no good for ever saying that we cannot have a motorway linking the south-east of England and the Channel tunnel with the north-east. We must have one, and the Government have a responsibility to provide it. That is one way of opening up the north-east. If one tries to travel down the A1 now from Newcastle to London one will run into no fewer than 10 lots of roadworks, and the journey for an average lorry driver will take six hours. That is not good enough. The Government must address themselves to that problem.

The Government have recognised the poor standards produced by local governments in the north-east, which is one reason why two urban development corporations have already been announced. They will be the kernel from which wealth will be created, jobs will come and people will be set free from the doctrinaire attitudes with which they have had to live for far too long.

Much has been made of the subject of the community charge and/or poll tax. I suggest that, before the Government rush headlong into it one way or the other, they should look at the whole of local government and examine whether it is absolutely necessary to have county councils, district councils, borough councils, parish councils and town councils, all of which are becoming far more politicised than they ever were. I receive letters telling me that a parish council in my constituency has decided to ban anything from South Africa because it is anti-apartheid. It was set up in the first instance to deal with allotments and bus shelters. Such councils were not intended to be places where local people can start to get involved in major affairs of government.

We ought to be looking at the duplication and at the manner in which local government comes about. Perhaps we ought to start by asking what local government should be doing and who should be doing it. Outer London

boroughs seem to be quite capable of running their own education and social services and they have all the trappings of county councils, yet we maintain county councils. I served on Buckinghamshire county council. If I wanted to go from the south to the north of the county I had a journey of 84 miles, and those who lived in the south and those who lived in the north had absolutely nothing in common.

I represent a constituency in a small county, Cleveland. That county council is totally unnecessary and bureaucratic nonsense, and the quicker it is done away with the better for the people of Cleveland. Officers of the local authorities are serving as county councillors and county councillors are officers of the local authorities. Therefore, we have the mish-mash of the professional politician. That is quite untenable, but we have brought the situation about and we must address it.

It is no good saying that a report is coming any minute now and that, when it comes, something will be done about it, because setting up a committee in the first place is kicking the problem into touch. The problem is there. We do not need a report — we need action. Perhaps the Government should pre-empt the report by seeking to re-examine the whole role of local government and determining what its priorities are and what they should be.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull): That is rubbish.

Mr. Holt: Having done that, we should establish and set about funding local government in a proper manner. There is no point in saying that it should be abolished altogether, because it has a role to play. We must determine that role. At the moment there is far too much duplication, waste and lack of accountability and far too many people are elected with no training, knowledge or expertise in anything.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): Is not the possible answer to my hon. Friend's question and to the theme that he is developing so well that local government is misnamed? It is not government. It has an administrative role which should be discharged as efficiently as possible in accordance with statutes passed by this House.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for taking up my theme and for following it through. Anyone who looks at what has happened in Cleveland county council in the last few days will see that it has lost £250,000 of its pensioners' funds by putting that money into a speculative newspaper. That newspaper was bound to fail, and everyone knew that. However, the council has wasted £250,000 that it did not have the right to lose.

What else has Cleveland county council done? It has just introduced apartheid studies in every secondary school in Cleveland. How many parents in my constituency or in Cleveland as a whole saw a Labour party local government manifesto that said that when Labour was in power it would mandatorily teach the children apartheid studies whether the parents liked it or not? I shall suggest to parents in my constituency that if they do not like it they should withdraw their children from those studies. That is not a right and proper thing to be taught in Britain's schools.

What happens in Cleveland about rate increases? The county council has massively increased the rates. We have

the highest rates in the country. Middlesbrough pays the highest rates of any town in Britain. The county council carried out a survey to justify the extent of the increase and announced that everyone in Cleveland likes having a 25 per cent. increase in rates. When I challenged the council and asked how many of the people surveyed actually paid full rates, it took six weeks to acknowledge my letter. It was two and a half months before the council sent me an answer and it arrived one week after the general election. The council came up with the staggering answer that 51 per cent. of the people that it had surveyed paid full rates and that they were prepared to pay an additional 25 per cent. if they were given the opportunity.

During the election campaign I was on the doorsteps of many houses in my constituency, yet I did not find too many people who said that they were not paying enough rates and wanted to pay more. I met a great number who said that they were paying far too much. That is one of the reasons why we cannot bring industry and commerce to the north-east. Industrialists know that they would be bled white by Labour-controlled local authorities which have no knowledge of how to run a business or of how to produce goods. Very seldom have any of them been in the position of employing anybody or being responsible for creating jobs and wealth.

In her contribution the hon. Member for Gateshead, East talked about the need for the north to have its own controlling agency. It had the Northern Development Agency and it was stuffed full of Labour councillors. They spent fortunes. How many jobs did they create? They created none at all. The business community in the north-east got fed up and frustrated and set up the Northern Development Corporation. That has superseded the Northern Development Agency because that was a moribund body, a talking shop, and a waste of all the resources that were poured into it. It had an office in Canada and one in the Far East. People could junket out there and junket back, but they did not produce any jobs. That is why the north-east of England has lost much of its manufacturing base.

There is no point in talking about a Minister for the north or about a northern development organisation that would be separate from this Parliament. One of the things that the hon. Member for Gateshead, East will learn is that from the Back Benches one can get at every Minister of the Crown. If there were a Minister for the north, every time one wrote a letter to the Secretary of State, it would be deflected to the Minister for the north and would not get to the source of the power about which my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) spoke so eloquently.

The north-east needs a radical change. We have to eradicate Socialism there, and one of the ways in which to do this is to ensure that the role of the media in the north-east is changed. At the moment people producing material for radio, television and the newspapers openly say that they are producing articles that they think suit the people. We need to ensure that there is a greater balance in the way in which the north-east is shown in the media.

Far too often, only the bad things in the north-east are projected. Let us see some of the good things, and let us see them more often. Let the media take note that the north-east of England will never prosper and survive and develop in the way that we would all like it to do unless the media present the north-east in a light that will encourage people to go there. People must be encouraged

to bring business there and to provide employment. It has taken a long time, but we are now beginning to persuade people in the north-east that profit is not a dirty word

that it is out of profit that we get investment and jobs. For years anyone in the north-east who made a profit was automatically castigated, but at long last we are beginning to get the message across that what we need is more profit which will bring extra investment. Investment will bring the jobs and the prosperity and, slowly but surely, we shall sweep away Socialism. At the moment, I am the frontiersman. Everything to the south of me, almost without exception, is blue. Very many of the places to the north of me, almost without exception, are red. Those days are changing. We will move that frontier forward more and more.

Mr. Prescott: Hallelujah!

* **Mr. Holt:** I had to smile inwardly when I heard the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) making his ranting and raving, but so-frequently-made speech about Rachman. I remember hearing the hon. Gentleman make speeches like that nearly 25 years ago when we were both founder members of Brent council. He has not changed and Socialism has not changed. However, the north-east of England is changing. That is why the Conservative party has had an excellent general election result and next time we will have an even better one.

8.30 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): I am tempted to begin by asking, "What was I saying when I was so rudely interrupted four years ago?" I remember what I was saying. I was commending the National Audit Act 1983 to the House as a useful advance in parliamentary accountability which did not go far enough. I still hold that view and I hope to return to that subject in debates on the Public Accounts Committee.

I must state how pleased I am once again to represent the people of Norwich, South. The city of Norwich has an incomparable record of Labour-controlled local government, which is now desperately threatened. The city has a cultural tradition in the arts and architecture unlike any other city of its size. It has a formidable intellectual tradition of radicalism and dissent. I hope to live up to those traditions. I pay my respects to my predecessor, and I am sure that the people of Norwich, South thank him for his work and interest in local government.

Today's debate is primarily about inequality and the lack of chances. I intervene briefly because I come from a region that is considered to be on the prosperous side of the divide and therefore free from the curse of unemployment, the decline of public services, increasing homelessness and the lack of opportunity. Naturally enough, things are not quite like that. The years of Conservatism have not been good years for many people in Norwich. We now have more than 8,000 unemployed and 500 vacancies and we have an unemployment rate of 16 per cent. inside the city boundary.

The economy of Norwich is traditionally based on manufacturing industry, in mechanical and electrical engineering, footwear, food, drink and confectionery. We have seen many redundancies and closures of long-established firms in those industries. For example, Boulton and Paul, Laurence Scott, the Co-op footwear factory,

[Mr. John Garrett]

Courtaulds, Marconi, the Norwich Brewery and Norplan. The manufacturing base of the city has been massively undermined.

It is true that there has been some growth in retailing and financial services, but many of those jobs are part-time. The result is a grossly unbalanced labour market with very few opportunities for craft trainees and apprentices. Many skilled men and women will never use their skills again. The Government frequently talk of the substitution of manufacturing employment with service employment as if the creation of a job in a boutique selling jeans balances the loss of a skilled fitter's job in electrical engineering. It clearly does not.

For many years, Norwich had a remarkable record in council housing. In the 1970s, it was not unusual for the city to build 600 or 700 houses a year. Last year, it built 80 and this year 40. The housing waiting list is now more than 5,000, and 25 homeless families a month have to be housed. My advice surgeries are already filled with people desperate for a home who are living in cramped, substandard accommodation. What kind of society is it that cannot provide decent rented housing? There is no private solution to the problem when house prices have gone far beyond the reach of those on average earnings.

Education is a key issue in equality of opportunity. As a county borough, Norwich used to have a fine record in education with properly staffed, funded and maintained primary, middle and comprehensive schools. Then education was taken over by the primitives on the Tory-controlled Norfolk county council. Norwich was levelled down to the standards of an authority that has been singled out by Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools as providing an inadequate service. Norfolk county council has a low level of expenditure per pupil, a high pupil-teacher ratio and underfunding of GCSE and even needs to spend £600,000 on fire precautions to meet current standards in primary schools. There are only four nursery schools in the whole county. Thirty-three nursery units built with the encouragement — one might say at the behest — of the present Prime Minister when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science have never been used for their intended purpose. Currently, the levels of school ancillary staffs are being reduced. We have a picture of educational deprivation in what is supposed to be a prosperous county. Poor public services are not related to geography, but are a factor of Conservative control.

There are two important school issues in my county — the failure to provide a new school in Bowthorpe village, a fast-growing area of the city, and the proposed closure of the Bowthorpe comprehensive school, which has an excellent staff, a unique system of pastoral care and good results. It is being closed ostensibly because of falling rolls, although it is clear that there will be a shortfall of 600 comprehensive school places in the city by the early 1990s. The closure of that school by Norfolk county council probably has more to do with the value of the school's extensive grounds. I will be seeking early discussions on that matter with the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

There are also crucial issues in higher and further education in the area. The Norwich school of art — an institution with a national reputation — was first encouraged, as a result of a review by the National

Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education, to merge with the Great Yarmouth college of art and design. When discussions were under way, the White Paper on higher education produced in April 1987 proposed entirely new arrangements for funding colleges which left the Norwich school of art as one of the colleges that could be opted out of local authority control altogether. That proposal is repeated in the Gracious Speech. The result is total confusion for that institution. It cannot plan ahead and contemplate development. I hope that the Government will clarify in short order what is meant by allowing some colleges to opt out of local authority control and what that will mean for funding.

Another educational issue of the greatest importance to Norwich is the sudden and massive £4 million cut levied on the funding of the university of East Anglia. That is a cut of 16 per cent. overall and 19 per cent. in the academic cost centres. That will lead to the loss of 110 academic and 75 non-academic posts. At a time when the nation and the region need more graduates, a very well regarded and successful university is singled out for a most destructive attack. What is the rationale for that? By the standards of similar countries in western Europe, we already have a very low level of investment and a low level of participation in university education. However, the Government are now proposing an economy by cutting investment in university education still further.

In all those ways and more, in health, social services and transport, our quality of life in Norwich has suffered for the sake of tax reliefs which most of the beneficiaries hardly noticed. In what is supposed to be a prosperous corner of prosperous England which is envied, I suppose, by most of my hon. Friends, we have rising homelessness, grievous unemployment and deteriorating opportunities for our children. The mean and destructive spirit of present-day Conservative ideology reaches into every corner of our country, north and south. If people are weak, old or poor or do not have adequate economic clout, they suffer.

What remedies are contained in the Gracious Speech? There will be further cuts in public expenditure when we really need more houses, schools, hospitals and more expenditure on roads. There will be compulsion to use the make-weight, make-work dead-end youth training schemes. There will not be more expenditure on our schools, but there is a half-baked and divisive proposal for schools to opt out of the local authority system. There is a proposal for a poll tax. That will be a tax on young adults which will hit students and the young unemployed particularly hard. However, I listened to speeches by Conservative Members today and yesterday which contained many awful warnings about the poll tax. I have an idea that the Government may slink away from that poll tax in the end.

The Gracious Speech also promises the truly ominous privatisation of water authorities. There is the greatest concern for the quality of the water supply in Norwich. We have alarming levels of mercury in our waterways. The Broads are polluted by agricultural run-off. The Norfolk beaches are polluted by sewage. Who will safeguard water and river quality when the Anglian water authority is profit-driven by privatisation?

As it is, Norfolk is an environmental tragedy. Farming and forestry have drenched the landscape with chemicals. In the past 40 years, we have lost 60 per cent. of our hedgerows. Every year, sites of special scientific interest

are destroyed. The wetlands are under threat. In Norfolk, we have that unique anomaly in Government that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pays farmers to drain their wetlands and the Department of the Environment pays farmers not to. The landscape has been destroyed to produce great heaps of grain that nobody wants. Add to that devastation the removal of the environmental protection through water authority privatisation and there will be an environmental disaster. There is great concern about that and other environmental issues in my constituency.

In all those ways, modern Conservatism has meant a reduction in our quality of life and the quality of our community standards. Most of East Anglia may have enjoyed a superficial material prosperity from Conservatism, but many thousands have been left out. I speak for them.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Five hon. Members still hope to speak, including two who wish to make their maiden speeches. I appeal for brief contributions so that I can call all those hon. Members before the Front Bench spokesmen.

8.41 pm

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): I shall certainly oblige you, Mr Deputy Speaker, in that regard.

I must begin my remarks by sharing with the House a dilemma that I face. I have become a good friend of the previous hon. Member for Norwich, South, yet it is properly my duty to commend to the House the excellent and experienced speech made by the renewed hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett). I am sure that he would not wish me to follow his remarks as though he were a maiden speaker. He is obviously returning to the task with experience and familiarity, and has just made a good speech to prove it.

The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that I am not unfamiliar with Norwich. It is, as it describes itself, a fine city, and my late father was an employee of one of the businesses to which the hon. Gentleman referred—Laurence Scott. I had Easter lunch with my mother in the Maid's Head. Therefore, as we co-exist in this Parliament, the hon. Gentleman and I will have something that we can talk about.

The same must surely be said of the excellent maiden speech of the new hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin). I knew her in another place—more often than not in Strasbourg, where she did a splendid job as the Member for Tyne and Wear. She made the absolute model of a maiden speech. I hope that her new hon. Friends from the north-east of England will convey those appreciations to her.

I want to make a few limited remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, contained and restrained in the light of your injunction from the Chair, about inner-city areas and local government. It may well be that some hon. Members would give me an argument on my experience of inner-city areas, representing, as I do, the constituency of Solihull, which would not on any test rate as an inner-city area, but in another and previous existence I was leader of an interesting authority called the West Midlands metropolitan county council. Those who are familiar with the west midlands will know that it embraced Lozells and

Dorridge and, if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will permit me to say so, Four Oaks and Nechells too. Across the conurbation were the outer prosperous areas, and there were the inner, deprived and needy areas too.

One of the few arguments that retained some validity in the days when we discussed and then abolished the metropolitan county councils was that they could serve as an instrument for sub-regional redistribution of resources between the wealthier people on the periphery and the less prosperous in the centre. However, those arguments became somewhat marginalised by the orgy of overspending that took place in the death throes of the metropolitan county councils. Therefore, perhaps the one valid argument was lost in that rather inglorious and inelegant closing performance.

Many things have contributed to the rundown and unsatisfactory state of our inner-city areas. A number have been touched upon rather combatively during the debate, and I do not wish to make any particularly combative points at this stage. I shall deal with one rather less contentious point, which is that urban sprawl, as it has reached out into the countryside on the edges of our conurbations, has gone hand in hand with central urban evacuation and demoralisation. Some studies, such as those of Dr. Alice Coleman of London university, have shown that the relationship between urban sprawl on the one hand and central urban evacuation on the other is 1:1. That permits the conclusion, not merely that they have gone hand in hand but that those activities at the periphery have helped to cause the disadvantages and the evacuation at the centre.

No one, from whatever place within the political spectrum, would disagree that, ultimately substantial resources must be spent in our inner-city areas and, if I may put it this way as a representative of one of the outer-city areas, it is in our interests to do so. I do not want to live in a prosperous midlands suburb a few miles from a society that is disintegrating, because that is no good for my constituents. If they have to contribute to those costs, I suspect that they will willingly do so.

It is a concomitant tragedy of that situation that much of the land that is now redundant in our inner-city areas is in public ownership in one form or another. If one examines the audit, one finds that it belongs to the water authority, the waterways board, the gas board, the coal board, the city council, and so on. Those parcels of land are languishing on the books of those public bodies at unrealistic book values which might almost be designed to repel any interested inquiry. That state of affairs is leading nowhere and helping no one.

We must grab hold of some of those sites in an imaginative way, award them a pretty broad-range omnibus planning permission and sell then at auction for anybody who will give anything. Let them go away with one condition only attaching to that purchase—that the stipulated or chosen development within the planning permission must be commenced within 12 months and finished within a further period. Such an approach will result in book losses for public bodies. My answer to that is, "So what?" We must move some of those sites, and until we start work on the fabric we shall not start work on the morale.

We have the resources. At the time of the Budget, an interesting and sincere debate showed that there were two sides to the argument. Some said that we should cut taxes,

[Mr. John Mark Taylor]

others that we should have more public expenditure. The interesting thing about cutting tax from 33p to 27p is that the net result in the Chancellor's hands is £1.1 billion of extra revenue per annum in real terms. Therefore, those who wish to see more public expenditure and those who wish to see reduced taxation are on the same side of the argument.

As the Revenue is having good inflows of money, as national borrowing is low, and as there are signs of increased economic activity, there is reason for confidence that the pledges in the Gracious Speech about the inner areas will be followed through. The kind of leadership that leads the party that I support does not merely say that it will do it; it does it. We can expect that to take place. I am glad that it will, and I hope that we shall have more bodies like the London Docklands development corporation, which, under the inspirational leadership of Mr. Reginald Ward, has worked a miracle in the Isle of Dogs. I hope that we shall see more of that.

My last remark—I know that others are anxious to speak—concerns the very nature of local government. A complete misunderstanding has become current that supposes local government to be a kind of model village of central Government. It is thought that this legislature, and the Government who come here and respond to it, are one kind of great institution within our society, and the belief has grown up that local government is the same thing, only smaller. It is not; it is quite different. Local government is not governmental, but administrative. It is in place by statute to discharge statutory responsibilities, and the people who are elected regularly to its councils to supervise its discretions should remember that they are there in an administrative role and answer to that in a sensible style.

The Leader of the Opposition, in response to the Gracious Speech, referred to the theft of power from local democracy. I think that the right hon. Gentleman is playing a leading part in misunderstanding the role of local government. I hope that I am not, and that I never have done. I spent 13 years or more in local government, and it has led me humbly to the conclusion that, in stepping into the inner cities, the Government must use their own authority. They may be answerable to the House, through institutions such as the London Docklands development corporation, but if they need to step aside and bypass local government they should do so, and they will have our support in doing so. I recommend that they will succeed only if they do that. I support the Gracious Speech, and those sections of it in particular.

8.51 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a maiden speech in a debate on the inequality of opportunity in Britain. I do so not as one of the Celtic minorities in the House, although I am so qualified, but rather as an elected representative of Lewisham, Deptford—a constituency clearly located in the prosperous south-east, and a mere three miles from the Palace of Westminster. That constituency was most ably served by my very distinguished predecessor, the late right hon. John Silkin. I know that hon. Members will share my deep regret that premature death has prevented him from serving in some new capacity in his planned retirement from the House.

It is almost 24 years since John Silkin made his maiden speech on the subject of the Rent Act 1957 and property profiteering. He pointed out then that the aims of the Act to bring more properties into letting had signally failed, producing instead a property market rife with speculation, extortion and profiteering. Such is the continuing pressure of housing need in Deptford today that I know that he would have had no confidence whatever in the new free market policies for housing outlined in the Queen's speech.

The Prime Minister referred last week to her Government's success in bringing independence and power to the people. I regret to say that that has not been the experience of the people of Lewisham, Deptford. Many of my constituents have suffered the very worst consequences of a divided Britain. Half our manufacturing industry has disappeared since 1981; one person in five is unemployed, and, among those in work, wages are well below the average for the south-east. Yet there is no lack of pride, spirit, determination or endeavour among the people of Deptford. We may live in the deprived inner city, but we still have a sense of community. We want the best for our community in housing, employment and education, and we want it for all the community.

In the Prime Minister's speech last Thursday, we were promised new freedoms and responsibilities in housing, education and local government finance. On behalf of the people of Lewisham, Deptford, I have to ask how those freedoms will be gained and those responsibilities exercised by the poorer members of our society. Or are they lesser beings in the new order? In Lewisham borough as a whole, 22 per cent. of the population live, or rather subsist, on supplementary benefit. The combined waiting and transfer list for council housing alone numbers close on 25,000, and hundreds are literally homeless. Yet no one, in my experience, is seeking dependence. People want the dignity and self-reliance of a job, but there are on average 35 unemployed people for every registered vacancy.

People want improved council housing and better education, and they are willing to pay for it. Indeed, they are paying—paying for collective provision, and repeatedly returning Labour councillors to office. But we are told that a change of tenure is the answer to housing problems in the inner city. Frankly, I find that notion incredible. What alternative landlord is going to provide for the needs of the tens of thousands queuing for homes in Lewisham? What alternative landlord is going to be financially viable—even profitable—in providing housing for the average family, or the pensioner in the inner city? Or could it be that the new landlords will be supplied with the public money denied to elected local authorities? My local council has repeatedly put forward exemplary plans both for its own programmes of house building and environmental improvements, and for employment initiatives in partnership with Government. On the latter, it has even been congratulated by the Department of the Environment on the range and content of the projects submitted.

There is no lack of initiative by Labour councillors in the inner city. There is, however, a dire lack of finance. A Government injection of a couple of million pounds under special programmes goes no way to offset the estimated £137 million lost to Lewisham council in central Government support between 1980 and 1986.

I can promise that the people of Lewisham, Deptford will not readily accept cosmetic solutions to their real and pressing inner-city problems. We shall also be looking carefully at the Government's promise to introduce a Bill "to reinforce the system of firm but fair immigration control." In more than a quarter of the households in my constituency, the head of the household was born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan. Those people are not seeking open-ended immigration; far from it. But they do seek, and I seek on their behalf, a just law which does not split families, and which gives our black citizens the freedom to receive visitors from abroad on equal terms with everyone else.

Freedom has been a recurring theme of speeches in the past few days. It is a much-vaunted concept, but one around which the House, like Britain, remains divided. As Socialists, we on this side of the House seek freedom tempered with justice, acknowledging that freedom for the strong all too often means exploitation of the weak. Our attempts to secure greater equality are frequently denounced, as they were today by the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), as barriers to that greater freedom. However, Tawney said:

"We must ask the vital question, 'Freedom for whom?' For there is no such thing as freedom in the abstract, divorced from the realities of a particular time and place."

I am only too aware of the realities of my inner-city constituency and of the needs of its people. I come here to campaign for those people and to resist every measure that shifts resources from the weak to the strong and from the have-nots to the haves.

8.59 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate the newly elected hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) on her eloquent speech. She spoke eloquently about her subject and also about her predecessor, the late right hon. John Silkin who was held in such high regard by hon. Members on both sides of the House. He is very much missed by us all. It was good to hear her speak so well of him.

The hon. Lady has strayed quite a long way from her Celtic origins. Furthermore, she can be no believer in the north-south divide, judging by how she referred to the conditions, as she sees them, in her constituency. I was also glad to hear that she seemed to reject utterly her leader's call to scrap all the immigration laws. I am sure that her constituents are pleased that there is to be a firm and fair immigration policy.

The Gracious Speech is excellent. I welcome my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to his new role and look forward to his introduction of the three pieces of legislation that were outlined in the Gracious Speech. The first relates to the withholding of benefit from school leavers. School leavers should not have the right to go straight on to the dole. However, the Government should ensure that school leavers have a proper choice when they embark upon their careers. It is one of the most important decisions that anybody has to make. School leavers should not feel compelled to take the first job that is offered to them.

The Sun criticised my right hon. Friend for proposing a job search allowance for six months. If he is criticised on both the Right and the Left, perhaps he has chosen the right path. The careers advice that is available to school leavers should be adequate and ensure that sufficient

choices are put before them. If they are not to be pushed into the first job that is offered to them, we shall look forward with great pleasure to the legislation.

The legislation on the inner cities is to be welcomed. As the inner cities have been regarded as unemployment sinks for so long, we must take new initiatives. Excellent work has been done by the city task forces. Will my right hon. Friend consider the inclusion of Bolton among those areas where special measures can be taken? There is high unemployment in some areas in Bolton, and they would benefit from such measures. I am not sure whether the proposed legislation would include Bolton, but I ask my right hon. Friend to include specific towns such as Bolton.

The third piece of legislation will deal with the right of individuals not to strike. It will provide for freedom to work. If my right hon. Friend is considering where the balance should lie between protecting the rights of the individual and looking after the cosy interests of the closed shop, I urge him to back the individual every time. It is not always very comfortable when one person is right and everybody else is wrong, but the Government should not flinch from supporting any individual who has to make a difficult choice. It is not easy for the politician who is right when everybody else is wrong. He may find that he is in difficulties. If the Government are wondering where the balance lies, they should stick with the individual. I hope that the CBI, the Institute of Directors and other employer bodies will not persuade the Government to allow cosy arrangements to continue. The future must lie with the efforts of individuals, and we should back those individuals every time.

These pieces of legislation are the result of manifesto proposals. It was an excellent manifesto. It outlined three guarantees. I have dealt with the 16 to 18-year-olds. There is a guaranteed youth training scheme for them. The manifesto also proposes that within one year a place should be guaranteed for all those aged between 18 and 25 who have been unemployed for six to 12 months. For them there are the enterprise allowance schemes, the job clubs and the new job training scheme.

I am disappointed that the trade unions are backing away from the agreement on the JTS. Ron Todd was a TUC representative when the agreement was drawn up by the Manpower Services Commission. I wonder whether the unions should continue to play a role on the MSC when their role is so negative. They seem to be far more interested in looking after the rights of people in work and are not sufficiently interested in looking after the rights of those who are out of work. The Government should reconsider the role of the unions on the Manpower Services Commission to see whether or not we should continue their involvement.

I welcome most of all the proposals for those who have been out of work for longer periods and who are aged over 25, because in the past people between the ages of 25 and 50 have been relatively neglected. The number of those who have been out of work for a long time has increased substantially. Before the election I produced a publication called "Operation Longstop" — copies of which are available in the Library — and I am pleased to see that the recommendations in that publication have been picked up to such an extent in the manifesto. In particular, I welcome the improvements to the community programme, so that people need not turn down a place simply because

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

they can get more by way of benefit. The fact that they can get at least as much, or even more, on the new style community programme is very much to be welcomed.

In my book I draw attention to the plight of those who have been out of work for long periods. The number of people out of work for five years or longer has risen from 66,500 in 1983 to nearly 250,000 currently, and I am particularly pleased that the manifesto promises that all those out of work for more than two years and aged under 50—it was a stated aim rather than a specific promise—will be guaranteed a place in a training scheme, the new community programme, the enterprise allowance scheme or a job club. That reflects one of the main recommendations in my booklet "Operation Longstop".

Bolton's job clubs have now placed more than 200 people in employment since the first one opened in September, and anyone who has been out of work for six months or longer is welcome to apply. I appeal to all the unemployed of Bolton who are eligible—of whom there are about 10,000—to apply for a place in the job clubs as they have been extremely successful in encouraging a positive spirit among all those who have participated. I am confident that unemployment in Bolton will drop further if people take full advantage of these schemes.

The latest figure from the Bolton jobcentre shows that unemployment has fallen by 1,500 in the past year, and I am sure that we shall see a continuing drop in the future if people take full advantage of the Government's schemes and our strengthening economy.

9.7 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the opportunity of speaking in the debate on the Gracious Speech. The hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) said that he thought that the topic had been chosen by the Official Opposition because of the emphasis on deprivation and inequality. All I can say is that the Secretary of State's speech left me wondering what the debate was about, as in my opinion it was a gratuitous insult to the honest poor of our nation, given that the first part of the afternoon was devoted to crime and crime prevention. Those who look to the poor for the source of crime are often looking in the wrong place.

At the same time, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), on his tour around the kingdom, forgot that Northern Ireland is still part of the United Kingdom. As a result, I am glad to be able to speak this evening, especially as my colleagues and I represent that part of the nation which is recognised by most as the area of greatest deprivation that has suffered most from the problems affecting other parts of the kingdom—more unemployment, lower incomes, greater poverty and poor health.

I welcome the comments of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). He did not allow me to intervene when he referred to Scotland, even though I come from that part of the country which gives Scotland its name—the land of the Scotti—the land of the Irish. As one of the Scots-Irish, I believe that the right hon. Gentleman's plea was important.

It was echoed in a fine maiden speech by the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin), who suggested that there may be a place for regional assemblies, and I was reminded that as Leader of the Opposition the Prime

Minister said that it was the task of Conservatives to encourage diversity and to ensure that it could flourish. While there is a tendency to think of central Government as the only way out, it is interesting that many of the Commonwealth countries, the United States of America, which is regarded as our strongest ally, and West Germany all have systems of federalism. The time has come for this House to consider that form of government for the future of the nation and to give a place to the diversity in the regions.

Although this is not relevant to the concept of federalism, the Treasury may consider that, instead of building larger buildings and more offices for Members and staff here, it could spread the finance around and have a House of Commons that deals with the central issues of the nation and give the regions greater power and scope to deal with the diversities that exist.

Northern Ireland is deprived in other ways. It is deprived, unlike any other part of the kingdom, in that joint authority is shared with a foreign Government through the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I would have thought that, almost two years after it was signed, those who are entrusted with administering it would be wanting to trumpet forth its worth. The hon. Member for Langbaugh (Mr. Holt) complained about the difficulties in getting answers to questions from local authorities. We have similar difficulties getting answers from the Northern Ireland Office. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had an opportunity to answer a simple question that I tabled for answer on 29 June. It asked:

"in what ways the Anglo-Irish agreement has contributed to peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland since 15 November 1985".

His answer was:

"I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible."
—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1987; Vol. 118, c. 28.]

I would have thought that there would have been such self-evident benefits at the present moment that he would have wanted to herald them to the world, but the reality is that no benefits have been forthcoming.

We should consider sharing the wealth of the nation throughout the nation. In that context I question the glib use, in debates about the poll tax or revision of rates, that comes through regularly from Government Departments about winners and losers. It would be tragic if, in the words of a very wealthy gentleman, the rich are the winners and the real losers are the frugal poor. Those who are thrifty and who have built the nation to a large extent are constantly penalised.

Due to the time, I am unable to deal with other issues, but I shall deal with one. The people of Northern Ireland have suffered from the use of identity documents when voting. At least 2 per cent. of the people going to the polls, with no one questioning their right to be there, are not allowed to vote. They have not got the prescribed documents. We on this Bench counselled against such a system. We desire a proper identity document for the whole nation. Such a document could be useful with regard to the problem of alcohol addiction, especially teenage drinkers.

Northern Ireland is not being treated as an equal part of this kingdom. We were regaled some time back by guidance that was given to the unemployed to get on their bike and go looking for a job. We had a refinement of that from a well-meaning former Minister of State in Northern

Ireland who said that he had gone to America and tried to get them to open immigration so that our people could go there again; no longer on a bike but on a Boeing.

9.15 pm

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I pay tribute to my predecessor, Jim Craigen. He is held in very high esteem for his devotion over many years to the interests of the Maryhill people. Since coming here I have met many hon. Members who hold him in high regard as a man of ability who did his work here and in Scotland, particularly in regard to local government, with great distinction. I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members will join me in wishing him well in his future endeavours. Nothing could give me greater pride than to stand here today as Jim Craigen's successor in a long line of Labour Members for Maryhill.

My constituency has been described in the press as "a citadel of Socialism". That might be journalistic exaggeration, but the answer at the general election to the Prime Minister's threat of bringing an end to Socialism in Britain was to increase a Labour majority of 11,000 to an all-time high of over 19,000. The story is similar all over Glasgow. It is the city that has everything except a Tory Member of Parliament.

In the few days that I have been in the House I have frequently heard Government Members claim that their policies are working, but just a little more slowly in Scotland. We are told to have patience and that all will be well. Let me tell the House just how patient Maryhill will have to be. A total of 29 per cent. of adult males in Maryhill are unemployed. In the Woodlands ward the rate is 34.4 per cent. In Rutherglen more than half the unemployed have been so for over a year, and 20 per cent. of unemployed women have been unemployed for three years or more. Half the youths in my ward are unemployed, and the Queen's Speech gives no hope whatsoever of any improvement in their lot.

It is strange to reflect that 200 years ago, the 1784 Tory Government of William Pitt, in the reign of George III, deployed a more progressive attitude to jobs and industry than do their present-day successors. That Government gave a cash grant of £50,000—£25 million at today's prices—to the Forth and Clyde canal company to complete the unfinished canal on a route through Maryhill to link with the Clyde at Bowling. That company was what Government Members would call a "lame duck" company. It had run out of money and could not raise cash on its own. The Government gave real money—not a loan, not a capital allocation, which is Whitehall's for permitting local councils to spend ratepayers' money to pay off interest on borrowing.

Maryhill prospered. The population grew rapidly and industry boomed. Mining, glass-making, chemical, engineering and many other industries flourished, but most of them have now gone. At the height of the prosperity a pub was opened. It still stands on Maryhill road. It is called The Politician because its building was the headquarters of the Maryhill Tory party. However, for many years now Maryhill Tories have drowned their sorrows in the Bearsden watering holes, but even that is no longer the haven that it once was.

The industries that I mentioned have almost entirely gone. It did not all happen in eight years of Tory Government, but the climate has considerably worsened in recent times. Since 1978 many companies have ceased

to trade, with a loss of more than 4,000 jobs in my area. Employment in the largest companies that existed in 1978 has fallen from 13,000 to 5,500. However, the people of Maryhill are not cowed. Their vote on 11 June was a warning, and in their own interests Government Members should heed it.

A different but related aspect of the Queen's Speech concerns the rights of trade unionists who are fortunate enough to be in work. The attitude of the Government to trade unions has nothing to do with giving power to the people, but everything to do with weakening democratic opposition to Government policy. This Government will spend any amount of money, as they did during the coal dispute, to weaken trade union organisation. They have victimised trade unionists for carrying out the democratically decided wishes of their members. If this Government want people power, why are the people who work in our industries the last to know about management decisions that affect their livelihoods and working conditions? Why do the Government not require employers to give adequate time off for training and education?

Let us consider some of the proposals that the Government have come up with. There is, for example, the inspection of trade union accounts. Why do the Government not bring forward amendments to require the political parties to reveal all their sources of income, or would it be giving too much power to the people if they were enabled to choose a packet of biscuits that did not contribute to Tory party funds?

In the election of trade union executives, double standards are again at work. The people of Scotland voted for a Scottish assembly, and against the Government's policies, but they do not get what they voted for. Whether one is talking about teachers in England or Scotland, about the GLC, GCHQ or the Morris furniture workers in Glasgow who balloted for trade union recognition, the Government respect only the ballots that come up with the answer that they want. Under the new rules that the Government hope to bring in, it will not matter if 100 per cent. of the work force agree in a secret ballot that they want a closed shop. They will not get it.

The Green Paper openly admits that the reason for that legislation is to provide

"greater flexibility in the labour market and increased freedom of choice for employers when recruiting."

That is nothing more than an attack on the ability of trade unions to protect their members' interests and an invitation to unscrupulous employers to pay poverty wages. Likewise, the charter for strike breakers who defy the result of a democratic ballot will serve only to bolster the employers' power. It is utter hypocrisy to see that as having anything to do with the rights of trade union members, because trade unions are democratic organisations which know an awful lot more about serving their members' interests than do Conservative Members.

The Government's readiness to exert stringent controls over the conduct of trade union affairs stands in sharp contrast to their willingness to leave the City to its own squalid affairs and to regulate itself. The Government have been rumbled by the voters in Scotland, Wales and the north, and it is no coincidence that the traditions and values of the trade union movement are part of the culture of those nations and areas. That is why the Government are bent, not on ignoring them, but on dismantling their rights to organise themselves collectively.

[Mrs. Maria Fyfe]

In conclusion, any trade unionist, or any person with a respect for democracy, will fail in his duty if he does not do all in his power to stand up for the rights of working people and in the defence of trade unions until once again we have a Government who truly believe that people should have the power to rule their own lives.

9.22 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): This has been a good debate, which has been characterised by the real issues of deprivation and lack of opportunity and which has been improved immeasurably by the quality of the maiden speeches. There have been eight maiden speeches today and although that seems an awful lot in one day, all made valid contributions to the issues that are before the House. I welcome the fact that nearly every one of those speeches — perhaps with one exception — overthrew the tradition of not being controversial. Indeed, they were controversial and colourful speeches that reflected the anger felt by people representing constituents who have voted in a particular way because they reject — and rightly so — the Government's policies, as embodied in the Queen's Speech.

I hope that the House will understand that trying to address some of my remarks to those eight maiden speeches will take a considerable amount of the limited time that is available to both Front Bench Spokesmen. However, it would be a discourtesy not to make an effort to comment on some of the points raised in those speeches. I thought at one stage that I might have not to comment on a maiden speech but to welcome the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) to the Back Benches. His contribution reminded the House that it is not "business as usual," whatever the result of the election, and that if the Government fly in the face of the evidence of what the people in certain parts of the country are saying, they will be in for a difficult time. That problem is not limited to Scotland.

The first maiden speech, that from the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) reminded me of the other dissident, perhaps the first dissident of this Government, Mr. Jim Prior, who was respected in the House because he argued that there should be a system for the regulation of fair wages, such as the wages councils. Indeed, because he argued a strong line on that in the Cabinet, he paid the price — as have most of the dissidents in this Government — and left the Cabinet. Indeed, when the hon. Gentleman made his point about the fishing industry I was reminded of the fishing industry in my area. He spoke of the importance of regulation in that industry, yet the Government set great store by deregulation. I hope he has more influence than we have in deterring the Government from deregulation and all its consequences.

My hon. Friends the Members for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) made powerful speeches, reflecting the cutting edge of those who represent constituencies with high levels of unemployment, considerable deprivation and poverty. Both showed their influence on and experience of local government. It was clear from most speeches that many hon. Members who have come to the House have direct local government experience, and at a time when the Government are mounting a massive attack on local authorities. The theme

throughout the debate has been the role of local authorities and that will be a major issue in the coming months.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield struck a humorous note when he talked about the circumstances here. He reminded Mr. Deputy Speaker that Mr. Deputy Speaker had promised to do anything he could to help the hon. Gentleman and that he would ask Mr. Deputy Speaker to provide him time for speeches. He reflected the humour of his father, whom we all remember. He seems to have his father's experience and humour, which will undoubtedly stand him in good stead.

My hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) reminded us of that beautiful city, its value and university, as well as the considerable difficulties facing it. When he spoke of golf courses, I thought that he had caught on to a mood. Perhaps he should be making the point about golf courses and everything that is in the air. I think that man will go far.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) made an eloquent speech and I particularly welcome her because we share a record. We crossed the Humber bridge together before it was opened, and when the car crashed I broke my back. She was in the car at the same time and I am pleased to welcome her to the House. We both recovered — [Interruption.] I do not think that she has come to finish the job. We welcome her to the House. She reflected the experience she gained in the European Parliament, especially in shipbuilding and fishing, which was a reason why she visited Humberside at that time.

I certainly welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), who is not a maiden speaker but what we call a retread; he is certainly no maiden. He reminded the House that in the areas of considered affluence in the eastern region there is deprivation, high unemployment and real problems with many job losses in the manufacturing sector. He will undoubtedly make considerable contributions to our economic debates, as he did in the past.

The final two maiden speeches came from female Labour Members who reminded us that women were under-represented in the House of Commons. I am glad to see that there are now far more women in the Labour party and I am sure that their numbers will increase as they begin to get a fairer proportion of representation in the House. Both spoke of the north-south divide — a constant theme in the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) reminded us that the prosperous south-east has levels of unemployment in some parts of our inner cities as high as exist in some of the worst parts of northern England. It is a division between the haves and have-nots and not strictly a north-south divide.

One million are unemployed in the south. Admittedly deprivation, poverty and unemployment are higher in many northern areas, and we shall reflect that in our debates, but we should not ignore the fact that we have high unemployment, a lack of opportunities, and considerable deprivation developing in our inner cities. That is presumably why we have had a considerable volume of propaganda from the Government about what should be done in our inner cities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) made an important contribution to an issue about which we shall hear more — trade unions and democratic representation. Indeed, we shall hear more

about democracy in our debates, whether about the democratic rights of local authorities to have a say in what happens in their areas or about the democratic rights of individual trade union members to have a say in the internal mechanisms of the trade unions and to decide not necessarily to be regulated by statute. She made a powerful point about the contribution that trade unions make to our society. No doubt all of them will make a considerable contribution to our debates, and I offer my congratulations, as will every Member of the House, to them on their maiden speeches. I hope that eventually we can get rid of the word "maiden" and call them first speeches.

I welcome the new Secretary of State for Employment, whom I remember from our debates on transport. I watched him while he was Secretary of State for Social Services, and some of the skills that he learned at the DHSS will be of use to him at the Department of Employment. He is quite adept at fiddling figures, as was shown when he fiddled the hospital waiting lists. I recall the conference when he threw a list of hospitals to everyone and said, "These are the hospitals that we have built," but apparently half of them had not been built or even planned. The Department of Employment has also been adept at fiddling the unemployment figures.

Instead of reiterating all the arguments about unemployment, which is clearly higher than unemployment in any of the major competitors and higher than it was in the 1930s, will the Secretary of State put honesty back into the unemployment figures and calculate them in the same way as other countries calculate them? Why does he not publish a Green Paper on how we will examine real unemployment, not just the numbers of those who are eligible for benefits? If we returned to the regular census reports, people would have more confidence in the figures given by the Department. I hope that the new Secretary of State can end the constant debate about fiddled figures every time the unemployment figures are produced.

The Secretary of State's experience in the administration of social security and unemployment benefits will stand him in good stead in his consideration of reform of the Manpower Services Commission. If he removes control over jobcentres from the MSC and puts it into the Department of Employment, he will be setting up a system whereby the same Department will deny benefit and place pressure on those who visit jobcentres to accept the employment offered or the skivvy schemes that were promised in the Conservative manifesto. He will be in breach of the belief, under both Governments, that we should remove pressure from the MSC and that people should be able to attend jobcentres without the fear of being pressured into jobs or the refusal of benefits. The Government are trying to apply pressure, especially with the coming job training scheme, the youth training scheme and the denial of benefit to which they are committed. It is also probably the first move towards privatisation of those services, but we shall wait to hear what the Secretary of State has to say about that.

Another feature of the Department of Employment is the amount of money that it spends on propaganda. The amount spent to publicise the YTS and JTS schemes increased elevenfold from £3 million to £34 million. The propaganda money spent by the DHSS doubled while he was Secretary of State there, although a great deal of it related to the AIDS problem. A fantastic amount of money has been spent by the Government, and by Saatchi and Saatchi in the process, to propagate the Government's

case, yet we are promised legislation that will deny local authorities the opportunity to explain their case using their resources. That is another example of the doubletalk that we can expect from the Government.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Prescott: The hon. Gentleman must realise that we have only 25 minutes left, so I shall not give way.

Today's debate was largely about deprivation and the lack of equality of opportunities. The provision of employment is the most important contribution to improving equality of opportunity and reducing deprivation.

I presume that the great emphasis on inner-city policies comes from the Government's new-found belief that something should be done in the inner-city areas. The Government should have accepted the policies that have been advocated over the past 15 years by members of the Labour party to deal with the problems of deprivation.

I notice that the new Secretary of State for Employment has displayed great concern about the amount of money that should be available from his Department for job creation. Indeed, within a couple of days of getting the job, the right hon. Gentleman was on television telling us that a lot more jobs will result from tourism. I worked in the tourist industry, and I can tell the House that it offers low-paid, low-opportunity, low-skilled jobs. Such are the jobs that mainly exist in that industry. It has been easier for such jobs to continue in existence because the protection of the wages earned by people in that industry has been taken away by this House. We are the only country, out of the 90-odd countries that observe the international convention, that has removed the protection on low pay for those in wages council industries.

What especially offended me when the Secretary of State made the announcement on television was that he felt that the way forward was to improve bed-and-breakfast accommodation in London. The reason why bed-and-breakfast accommodation in London is, under pressure is primarily because an awful lot of people got on their bikes and came down to London. There are 1 million homeless in the London area who have now been pushed into bed-and-breakfast accommodation, financed by the DHSS.

Why are there so many homeless? Why are there cardboard cities? Why are we using bed-and-breakfast accommodation to provide for our people? It is primarily because the Government have denied £18 billion to the local authorities to do the necessary work. They have also denied local authorities the use of £6 billion—a sum that the local authorities have obtained from capital funds—to build houses. The Audit Commission has told us that, in London alone, the Government cut £1 billion for house building from local authorities.

We have witnessed the collapse of public sector house building: the number has dropped from 11,000 to about 2,500. However, the Secretary of State has come along to tell us that the way forward is to improve bed-and-breakfast accommodation, together with an improvement in tourism. That illustrates the difference in our approach to this problem. If one wants to create jobs and meet the needs of homeless people, why do we not release the £6 billion that local authorities have in their accounts and allow them to build houses? The unemployed building

[Mr. Prescott]

workers should build the houses that will reduce homelessness. The local authorities should be able to carry out their traditional role as house builders. That is an easy way of providing real services, meeting real needs, and creating real jobs. The money, labour, resources and demand are obviously there. Why do we not allow local authorities to carry on and do that instead of having the Secretary of State coming on television giving us propaganda about bed-and-breakfast accommodation?

What I find especially annoying about the Government is that they claim that the London Docklands development corporation represents the way forward for urban development corporations. However, it has already been mentioned in this debate that some of the houses provided by that body cost almost £500,000. How do the people of Bermondsey and the docklands afford such housing? Of course, private money has rushed in on a bed of public money to build the infrastructure, but the houses on offer to people in that area cost between £100,000 and £500,000. The income of the average person in that area is between £10,000 and £11,000. How will they raise the money to obtain a mortgage in that area? The area is becoming extremely affluent and the property provided is for those who are extremely wealthy. Such housing developments have little to do with reducing deprivation and the lack of opportunity in those particular areas.

The problems that we face in our inner cities have developed because there is a shortage of training. There is a considerable shortage in every kind of skill. The Secretary of State should ignore what his Department has been saying for the past few years and ignore what is intended for YTS and JTS. They are skivvy schemes and they do not provide qualifications; indeed, they do not provide much opportunity for jobs. That is why people do not want to accept a place on those schemes. Some 20 per cent. turn down a place on YTS and more and more are turning down JTS and workfare projects. All those schemes witness the development of an army of skivvy labour who will be available for the inner-city programmes that the Government are now beginning to introduce.

The Government have made many complaints against the authority of Southwark. Indeed, today Lord Young made a speech in which he said that Southwark does not co-operate. I have considered the evidence. Southwark produced an alternative plan to get people back to work called "A Working Community." Such plans for jobs are always rubbished by the Government, so they sent in a task force. We asked the Government how many jobs it created, what resources it was provided with and what sort of schemes it produced. The then Paymaster General said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) that out of the £1 million available, only about £200,000 had been used. It was used for projects that included the establishment, in co-operation with a clearing bank, of a grant and loan scheme for local small businesses. That was recommended by Southwark council. Twenty places were provided for entrepreneurial training for people from the estates. That is welcome, but it was mentioned in the document "A Working Community". In another project, £12,000 was provided for the improvement of lighting and external security on the north Peckham estate. We all want that—it was recommended in "A Working Community".

Other projects involved the establishment of a co-operative shop, and the creation of industrial start-up units from garages. Another project gave support towards training for about 100 local people, which is similar to two-week JTS training. Finally, there were improvements to two adult education institute branches. The toilets were improved for £4,000 and a training course for 15 disadvantaged local residents was recommended.

After 18 months, the Government produced that alternative to "A Working Community". It represents few jobs and few resources and does nothing to reduce the deprivation in that area. On that basis, the Government give us all the propaganda about the extension to another eight inner-city areas. It is a charade. It does nothing for the real problems in our inner-city areas.

The local authorities have produced job plans and alternatives to the Government's schemes, whether YTS or JTS. If the Government looked at those alternatives, they would find real ideas. But the Government are not interested in those alternatives. They see no role for the local authorities or the trade unions participating in a reformed Manpower Services Commission. They see no role for them in the improvement of the quality of training for our youngsters and in providing jobs for nearly 1 million people of between 18 and 25. All that the Government offer is more skivvy schemes; a conscripted labour force. That is not a way forward for any of our people. It is those schemes and ideas that we in the Opposition shall fight tooth and nail because they do nothing to assist towards the reduction of deprivation or to increase the equality of opportunity in our society.

9.42 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): The House has listened to a series of impressive maiden speeches. All the hon. Members referred generously to their predecessors. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) referred to both his immediate predecessors. My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) put the case strongly for the east of East Anglia. The hon. Member for Dundee, East set out his case on unemployment, to which I shall refer.

The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) set out his view of the Conservative Benches, which seems to be that we all work in the City and are perpetually paired. Speaking as someone who has never worked in the City and who does not have a pair, I shall gladly come to an arrangement with the hon. Gentleman.

There were also excellent maiden speeches from the hon. Members for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin), for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett)—although, as has been said, he is a retiree—for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe).

The House also listened to a typically witty speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) and to powerful speeches by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), my hon. Friends the Members for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) and for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), and many others, but, above all, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). He was a most distinguished Leader of the House. His speech was elegant, short and to the point. At the end, in his typically modest way, he said that he was glad to be around. If I may say so, the House is glad that he is around.

The theme of the debate was inequality of opportunity. The Opposition's case is significant not just for what they set out but for what they left out. We have not heard a great deal about the need for a successful economic policy, yet there is not much equality of opportunity for elderly people in this country when inflation cuts the value of their savings in the terrible way that it did under the last Labour Government. Labour's inflation of 25 or 26 per cent. was a savage blow to millions of pensioners. We have not heard a great deal about spreading home ownership, yet there is not much equality of opportunity for men and women who are forced to remain council tenants rather than buy and own the houses in which they live.

We are not prepared to take lectures from the Opposition on equality of opportunity, because, like so many of the Opposition's policies, they are based on words, not actions. It is a deception to claim that opportunities can be achieved without successful economic and anti-inflation policy. One does not help the inner cities if one's economic policies collapse in ruins. One does not help the weak if inflation gets out of hand, because inflation robs the weak, not the strong. It hits the pensioner, not the person who is able to adjust his income quickly to rising inflation. All the Government's policies, social and industrial, are within the context of a sound economic policy; and if we do not achieve that, we do not achieve any of our other goals. It has been the consistent failure of the Opposition to recognise that which has helped to doom their position to one of perpetual opposition.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred to health care. Perhaps again we can remember exactly what happened under the last Labour Government. They had to cut the capital building programmes, such as hospital building, and the cuts that they inflicted were the worst since the war. Why? Not because the Labour Government wanted to do that. They did not want to cut the hospital building programme, but they had no option. The economy was in ruins. The IMF came in and Labour's cuts were the inevitable consequence, with the effects that it automatically had on employment in the construction industry.

The right hon. Gentleman also referred to perinatal mortality rates. He failed to point out that improvements in the maternity services have led to a sharp drop in the deaths of newborn babies, from 15.4 per 1,000 in 1978 when he was in government to 9.8 per 1,000 in 1985. There is now more spending on health than ever before, and the policy of redistribution is precisely the type of policy that he advocates. If we are to have a strong Health Service, a strong education service and a social security system that provides help for families, as my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes rightly urged, we need a strong economy. The Government have provided that. The Labour Opposition have most conspicuously failed in providing an economic policy with any credibility.

I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said about the level of unemployment. I certainly agree with him that central to the whole issue of equality of opportunity is opportunity for employment. What I cannot accept is his view of the trend in unemployment. It is true that, earlier this month, I announced a record monthly fall in unemployment, which was down by 64,000 on the seasonally adjusted basis. It is true that the figures have now come down below 3 million and that in May they fell

faster than at any time since records began. I should have thought that that would have been welcomed. I thought that it was on that issue that we were being challenged in the last election. However, the significance lies not in one month's figures, but in the trend of unemployment, which has fallen each month for the past 11 months. In the year to May 1987 unemployment has fallen by almost a quarter of a million. It is firmly established on a downward trend.

Let us be clear about what the figures mean not only for one month, but over the whole year. They mean that, during the year, the number of long-term unemployed has fallen by a record 61,000. They mean that, during the year, unemployment has fallen most substantially in the north-west, the west midlands, Wales — some of the areas about which the right hon. Member for Gorton spoke. The figures show that during the year unemployment in Britain fell faster than in any other industrial country and that our unemployment rate is now below that of our nearest neighbours, France and Belgium.

This fall in unemployment has not been achieved by the overmanning of the 1960s and 1970s. The United Kingdom economy is now into its seventh successive year of growth. We have experienced the smallest number of days lost due to strikes for a generation, inflation has come down and our goods are now much more competitive. Although earnings are still rising too quickly, there have been substantial gains in productivity, especially in manufacturing, where the rate of increase in unit labour costs has slowed dramatically compared to that of our competitors.

The conditions exist for a further fall in unemployment, but that will not happen automatically. It is vital that we remember the lessons that we have learned, that industry improves further its productivity and competitiveness and that we recognise that realistic wage settlements give us the firmest foundation for long-term prosperity. In this debate the Government have been urged to act in a number of ways, but it remains the case that the greatest contribution that the Government can make is to provide sound financial policies that will provide the low inflation that is necessary for individuals and for business and industry.

I agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East in this respect. Beyond their indispensable, strong, economic policy, the Government can take further steps. Nothing is more important than that we should help unemployed people back into jobs by improving training and by improving their skills. The aim is to help the unemployed to take full advantage of today's expanding opportunities. The priority is to help those who have been hardest hit by unemployment, especially the young and the long-term unemployed. To achieve this, the Government are committing themselves to a number of major steps that I hope the House will welcome. First, we are now able to guarantee a place on the youth training scheme for every 16 and 17-year-old school leaver who does not have a job.

Mr. Prescott: They cannot get qualifications.

Mr. Fowler: Contrary to what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East says, the youth training scheme offers training leading to recognised qualifications, and two thirds of trainees go into jobs or into further education — *[Interruption.]* There is no need for the hon. Gentleman to shout. He was demolished by one of my hon. Friends only last week. If the Opposition are readily interested in equality of opportunity, they should welcome

[Mr. Fowler]

the opportunities offered by the YTS which puts us ahead of most other countries. The fact that we can now guarantee a place to every school leaver is a major step forward.

The second Government commitment concerns the 18 to 25-year-olds who have been unemployed for between six and 12 months. Within the next 12 months we aim to guarantee places on the job training scheme, on the enterprise allowance scheme or in a job club. The people in this group are often too old to have benefited from the YTS and all too often they do not have the skills and qualifications that they need in a modern labour market. That is why the Government are determined to press ahead with the job training scheme that the Manpower Services Commission launched earlier this year. It is a training scheme of high potential specifically designed for the 18-to-25 age group.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West, I think it is a great pity that the Trades Union Congress has now succumbed to pressure to withdraw its support for this scheme. This is despite the fact that the TUC, through its membership of the Manpower Services Commission, participated in the design and launch of the scheme and despite the fact that my predecessor in this office accepted all the recommendations of the commission about the design of the scheme. It entirely exposes the hollowness of the Opposition case when they seek to talk about equality of opportunity. There will not be much opportunity for many of the young people in this age group unless they can get the qualifications that they need.

Our third aim is to work during the lifetime of this Parliament towards the position where everyone under the age of 50 who has been unemployed for more than two years can be offered a place on job training schemes, the enterprise allowance scheme, in a job club or on the new community programme.

The fourth change affects the community programme. The community programme currently provides more than 300,000 long-term unemployed people each year with a temporary job on projects that benefit the community. However, the programme has two weaknesses that are widely acknowledged by those involved. The opportunities it provides are largely part-time and the structure of the programme means that many of the jobs on offer are not sufficiently attractive to people on higher rates of benefit. Therefore, we propose that those working on the community programme should be paid an allowance which gives a premium over and above their social security benefit. That will ensure that no one entering the programme is worse off than he would have been on benefit and that no one is deterred from taking up the opportunities for financial reasons. That is a major reform.

—[Interruption.]

Those are substantial improvements in the programmes for the long-term unemployed. For the first time we will be able to extend the community programme to people with families, the longer-term unemployed and those who until now have had no financial incentive to take up the jobs on offer. I want to see the community programme

revitalised, offering a way back to work for people who until now had nothing before them except continuing and lengthening unemployment.

The fifth and final change concerns the management of the services. It is now clear to us that we will be able to give an even better service to the unemployed if we establish a comprehensive employment service covering the work of the jobcentres, restart, job clubs and the payment of benefits within a single organisation. I am therefore consulting the Manpower Services Commission about the transfer of the jobcentres and the related programmes to the Department of Employment to form part of a new comprehensive employment service. I shall write to the chairman of the commission this evening, and I will, of course, put a copy of that letter in the Library.

The Manpower Services Commission would then be able to concentrate on the vital task of modernising our training arrangements. That aim was set out in the election manifesto. We also said in the manifesto that we intend to enlarge the commission because our training strategy depends for its success on one thing above all else—the commitment of employers. The employers create the demand for skilled labour and they are the customers for it. However, just as important, the enlargement of the commission will mean that we can involve the new growing sectors of employment not now represented on the commission. I have in mind the new technologies, leisure, tourism, retailing, distribution, banking, insurance, financial services and small businesses. Those are the areas in which tomorrow's jobs will emerge. We think that it is therefore reasonable for the commission to be enlarged by up to six seats so that those areas can be represented. The restyled commission will be an up-to-date reflection of the balance of responsibility for training and will speak with greater authority as a result.

The Opposition have chosen the theme of today's debate to be equality of opportunity. They have made a weak case. Indeed, the choice of subject is curious. We have on record the views of the deputy leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who, on "Newsnight" in 1983, said:

"The Labour party are not the party of equality of opportunity. That is a view of society of the Conservative party. We, the Labour party, are the party of equality of outcome."

I leave it to Opposition Members to define what "equality of outcome" amounts to. By equality of opportunity, we mean equality before the law and defence from discrimination. We also mean the opportunity for people to own homes, to have pensions, to build up savings and own shares and to have the maximum choice over how their incomes will be spent.

By equality of opportunity we also mean that the unemployed must be provided with opportunities to get back into work. Over the next months the efforts of the Government will be directed at that goal, and particularly at helping the position of young people and the long-term unemployed in this country.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Crime (Use of Knives)

Motion made, and Question proposed. That this House do now adjourn. [Mr. Dorrell.]

10 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I am pleased to raise on the Adjournment of the House the problem of the use of knives in crime. I do so under the shadow of a hideous murder in Leicester of a 17-year-old trainee carpenter constituent of mine called Paul Webster. Stephen Michael Curran was last week convicted of that murder and also of the stabbing of a very brave police officer, Inspector Michael Holly, who was fortunate to survive the attack. I do so also in the presence of Mr. Dennison, who lost his son in a stabbing incident and who has launched a courageous campaign in an attempt to have the law changed. I appreciate that in an Adjournment debate I can refer only to the law as it is and ask the Government what they propose to do in order to meet the challenge within the law as it stands.

The law within which the Home Office and the police work is extremely weak. In the first place, when dealing with knives I would wish to pay a tribute, with which I know that you, Mr. Speaker, would wish to be associated, to my late father Barnett Janner, Lord Janner of the city of Leicester, who introduced the restriction of Offensive Weapons Bill which subsequently became an Act in 1959 and which resulted in the effective banning of flick knives and gravity knives, which have become rarely used. It is an offence under that Act to manufacture, sell, hire, offer for sale or be in possession of such a dangerous instrument.

Unfortunately, the Act does not extend to other knives which rejoice in such names as survival knives, Rambo knives, butterfly knives and other dangerous weapons, still less to knives which may be used entirely properly by anglers, hunters, carpenters, butchers or carpet layers; knives such as Stanley knives, especially those with retractable blades, and large penknives, which can, if used, be extremely dangerous.

The other Act which gives the police some power is the Prevention of Crime Act 1953, which provides:

"Any person who without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, the proof whereof shall lie on him, has with him in any public place any offensive weapon shall be guilty of an offence".

But an offensive weapon does not include an instrument which has normal and proper uses unless the prosecuting authorities can prove that the weapon is being carried by the person concerned with criminal intent. In effect, the burden of proof remains such as to make it almost impossible to achieve successful prosecutions for the carrying of knives which are normally used for proper purposes.

It is into that background that the police are faced with hooligans, with young villains and sometimes with perfectly ordinary youngsters coming together in gangs and carrying knives. Some of them, according to the Metropolitan police, are carrying them in London as a means for self-protection. As Chief Superintendent Mike Farbrother said:

"We are seeing early evidence of a generation which carries knives almost as part of their clothing."

It is becoming almost a fetish, a vogue, a fashion, and it is hideously dangerous and must be stopped.

This is a national problem. We know that about one third of all murders are committed with sharp instruments, the vast majority of which are knives. We know also that the problem is far worse in the metropolitan district than elsewhere. In Leicester, for example, it is regarded by the police as no more of a problem than in other places. However, the pages of the *Leicester Mercury* are too often filled with stories of knife attacks. Indeed, last week's issue contained a page with pictures of the sort of knives about which the Leicestershire police are worrying. Superintendent John Peacock, the deputy commander, says that it is not as big a problem as in other places—for example, in the Metropolitan police area—but that any control, whether voluntary or statutory, would be well received, as the police are concerned about people being able so easily to buy and carry craft and other potentially dangerous types of knives.

The question now arises of what control there can be in the absence of changes in statute, and what proposals the Government would make in the face of this problem. I know that the Minister, who is himself a distinguished lawyer, will take the problem seriously, as one who has both prosecuted and defended criminals in cases involving knives. I hope that he will bear in mind the horror caused to ordinary people when they are faced with a knife, even if the person does not intend to use it. I hope that he will not take lightly the fear that is struck into the hearts of so many people out on the streets, and sometimes in their own homes, when they are faced with someone carrying a knife. I hope that he will also take seriously the vast increase in crimes of violence in the Leicester area. In the past nine years such crimes have doubled in number, and many of them—although we do not know how many—involve the carrying and use of knives.

I was pleased to hear the Home Secretary say earlier today that he was having consultations with the shadow Home Secretary to see what common ground could be found. I am sure that there is much common ground. Equally, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will understand that it is the Government's duty to see that legislation is brought in. It is necessary to be a very able and, in some ways, a fortunate legislator to succeed, as my father did, in introducing a private Member's Bill from the Back Benches and to see it brought into force. It is the Government who have watched over, and failed to control, the vast increase in dangerous crime, and it is the Government who must now bring forward proposals to deal with it. The problem is worse in London than in other areas, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng)—whom I was delighted to see elected to Parliament—can testify. It is national, metropolitan and local.

The first possibility is that the Government will institute an immediate campaign to try to convince young people that the carrying of knives is as great a danger to themselves as it is to those whom they may face. Some youngsters carry knives, as they put it, "just in case". That is a very poor argument for carrying an offensive weapon. The same argument is sometimes used to suggest that police officers ought to carry guns, just in case they are faced with someone with a gun. That argument has been used successfully in the United States, and has contributed to the huge increase in crimes involving firearms. Anyone would encounter such cases if he had the misfortune to be out in New York, or even just to read the newspapers. But it is not an argument that we want to hear in this country.

[Mr. Greville Janner]

and we do not want it to be introduced to our police force. It is certainly not an argument from which the Government should take the least solace. What we want is to convince people that carrying knives of any sort is dangerous.

Secondly, it ought not to be thought that knives that are normally used for happy purposes can conveniently be carried, simply because one forgets to put them away. Nobody is trying to prevent anglers, hunters, carpenters or carpet fitters from carrying those knives that are part of their duty, work or sport, but when the purpose of carrying a knife is completed, it should be put away. It should be left at home. It should be regarded as a danger.

When, in due course, the Government consider changes to the law, they must strike a balance. When additional powers are given to those whose duty it is to protect the public, and when the burden of proof is changed, dangers to people's liberty are sometimes created. If we carry knives after dark, we should recognise that we may have to explain that the purpose of carrying it is lawful. If an ordinary member of the public is carrying a sheath knife, a hunting knife, or a knife with a retractable blade, it will not be easy to prove innocence.

The Government must try to convince shopkeepers—voluntarily, one would hope, without a change in the law—that they should take much greater care than they do today when they sell knives to members of the public. If voluntary efforts fail—as they failed over the sale of glue, and some of us were involved in that campaign—legislation will have to be introduced. In the case of glue, it became an offence for a shopkeeper to see glue if he knew or believed that it would be used for an unlawful purpose. It would be a misfortune if similar legislation had to be introduced for knives. I cannot call for it tonight. No doubt, however, legislation will have to be considered if shopkeepers continue, as at present, to sell weapons that are a menace to those whom they have no good reason to believe will use them properly.

The so-called survival knife is sold by many totally disreputable shops. One selling Nazi regalia is due to open within a mile of this House. Shops that sell such knives ought to be licensed. Knives should not be available for sale to anyone, particularly when they are obviously being sold to those who are villainous in intent. I should like all such shops to be licensed and as few licences as possible to be granted.

In the meanwhile, if we are not to have legislation—and I cannot call for legislative changes tonight—all those who sell survival knives should keep them locked up and sell them only to adults of apparently good intent. Furthermore, the name and address of every person who buys such a knife ought to be taken. I have spoken to shopkeepers, some of whom have said that that would be no problem, while others have said that it would create more bureaucratic trouble for them and that it would be difficult. I cannot see the least difficulty for them.

If a shopkeeper sells a weapon that may be used to kill, murder, maim or strike fear into the hearts of ordinary people, I cannot see why he should not take the name and address of those who buy such weapons and why he should not require some form of identification. It would not be so great a burden as if the shopkeeper were selling a gun, and it would act as a voluntary deterrent. I call upon those who sell potentially vicious, dangerous knives to the public

to take voluntarily the same sort of precautions today as they have been required to take by force of law over the sale of glue because voluntary measures failed.

The problem is vast. The deaths that have resulted from our failure to face the problem have been unnecessary, and they have caused grief and misery to hundreds of families. The thousands who are faced with the menace of a knife will not forgive the Government if they fail to take immediate steps in recognition of the concerted complaints that have been made to them by the police, in recognition of public concern at the growth in violent crime and in recognition of the Government's own failure to curb crime in accordance with their promise to do so. They will not be forgiven for that failure by any of those who are threatened, still less by the families of those who are murdered. There should be voluntary action and, if necessary, compulsory action by those who sell knives. It should be made more dangerous in law and in reality for those who carry knives and who should not have them on their persons.

10.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am glad that the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) has raised this subject. It causes considerable concern to the Government. Despite the fact, Mr. Speaker, that you fought this election in a non-partisan way, you will have doubtless cast your eyes on the Conservative party manifesto—perhaps someone whispered its contents in your ear—and you will have found a commitment by the Government to strengthen the law dealing with the sale and possession of offensive weapons.

The hon. and learned Gentleman has indicated a number of possible approaches for the Government to adopt, and I too would like to deal with that aspect of the problem. Before doing so, there are two preliminary points that I should like to make. The first relates to the increase in the number of incidents involving the carrying of knives and the second is about the existing law.

Let me deal first with the increase in the number of incidents in which people carry knives. I entirely agree with what the hon. and learned Gentleman said: there is an alarming increase in the numbers of people who are carrying knives, and I agree with his suggestion that in certain parts of our cities it is becoming part of the subculture to go around with a knife. That is a profoundly worrying and distressing fact that the Government must address.

The evidence is conclusive, and I give just two statistics. In Merseyside between 1985 and 1986, the number of robberies involving the use of a knife increased by 21 per cent., and in the Metropolitan area during the same period the increase was 29 per cent.

The nature of my responsibilities means that I go around the police stations and talk to police officers. I am very aware of their anxieties on this score. Therefore, like the hon. and learned Gentleman, I think that this is an urgent and pressing problem which Governments must address.

My second preliminary point relates to the existing law. If a knife is used for the purposes of assault and injury is caused, the offender will be charged not with the possession of an offensive weapon but with the more substantive offence that reflects the assault. The gravity of the charge will reflect the gravity of the offence—that is

to say, if it is a serious injury, the person may well be charged with an offence under sections 18 or 20 of the 1861 Act or with assault occasioning actual bodily harm.

Therefore, for the purpose of this debate, I confine my attention to the possession of offensive weapons as dealt with under the Prevention of Crime Act 1953. The hon. and learned Gentleman has, as one would expect, reminded the House of the contents of that statute. I am happy to say that he did so accurately. He correctly summarised the contents of the 1953 Act, so I do not have to do so. However, I want to dwell on the classes of weapon that are caught by the Act. Two classes are involved, as they fall within the definition of an offensive weapon.

One type of offensive weapon is the kind that is made or adapted for the purpose of causing injury. An obvious example might be a swordstick or a sharpened screwdriver. Both would fall within the first class of an offensive weapon, but that is not where the problem lies. It lies with any weapon—I use that word broadly—because it can be any instrument that a person carries for an unlawful purpose—for the purpose of causing an injury. It might be a milk bottle, a high-heeled shoe with a sharp stiletto or a knife.

It is here that we come to the core of the problem because there are a range of legitimate purposes that justify the carrying of a knife. The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West referred to the fisherman coming back from the stream with an angler's knife. Other examples are the housewife returning from the ironmonger having purchased a bread knife, the boy scout returning from camp with a sheath knife or the decorator who has been hanging wallpaper and has put a Stanley knife in his pocket. All those instances would be a proper possession of something that is capable of being a weapon. When a weapon is carried in those circumstances it is not an offensive weapon for the purposes of the 1953 Act, but it becomes an offensive weapon if the person who is carrying it has it for the purpose of causing an injury. It is the intent to which the 1953 Act is directed and it is that which causes the problem. How does one distinguish, in statutory language, between the first innocent example and the second example, which is far from innocent? What approach should we adopt?

The hon. and learned Member spoke about education and I agree with him. What is being done by Superintendent Farbrother in Lambeth is desirable and useful. In schools, youth clubs and other appropriate places we must ram home the message that the possession of a knife is, or can be, a criminal offence. It can be dangerous to the possessor and very dangerous to other people.

I agree with the hon. and learned Member that we must place increased emphasis on what might be called the broader educational aspects of the matter. However, I do not agree with him when he calls for licensing. The problem does not concern the Rambo-type knife, unpleasant though it may be, but with the potato knife or the bread knife, which is just as dangerous as the Rambo knife, but which could not be made the subject of licensing

regulations. There are other problems, but I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will forgive me if I do not develop them in this short debate.

I now turn to what I would like to see done. I appreciate that I cannot go into the detail of legislation, but I have been looking at "Erskine May" and I see that where the matter is ancillary to the main business before the House it is permissible for me to dwell on it in broad terms. The Government are not in a position to come forward with firm proposals, but it might be helpful if I were to canvass some of the broad ideas that have been passing through my mind and those of other people.

We must remind ourselves that flick knives and gravity knives have been made the subject of a prohibition. It is unlawful to sell a flick knife or a gravity knife. That is a precedent on which we could build. It would be perfectly possible for the Government to take powers to prescribe and prohibit certain classes of weapon. Those classes could be defined generically or by description. No doubt there would have to be powers to amend the list. There might have to be residual statutory defences, but those are problems of no great moment. It would be perfectly possible for Parliament to prohibit the sale, and probably the possession, of certain defined weapons. That may be a useful way forward that will commend itself to the House. However, there is a problem. The problem is that that will not go to the root of the difficulty. Although we could define and include Rambo knives in the prohibited classes, the bread knives, Stanley knives and carving knives are the major problems. We could not prohibit their sale, for the reasons that the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West and I understand.

We have to go a stage further. We have somehow to try to mark the statutory distinction between the fisherman, the boy scout, the decorator and the housewife and make it unlawful for someone without a lawful cause to have a knife tucked away in the back pocket either for offence or defence or because of pressure within the peer group. We must direct our statutory endeavours to that.

It would be idle to pretend that the Government have yet made a collective decision or are in a position to make proposals. However, we are giving urgent attention to how we can make it unlawful for people without good or reasonable excuse to have with them a sharp-bladed instrument. I hope that it will be possible for the Government in the near future to make proposals. They might be additional to the power to prohibit sale.

Like any Minister, I am conscious that we are likely to be criticised from both flanks. Some people will say that we have not gone far enough and others will say that we are infringing civil liberties. That is for the future. For the present, all that I can say is that I regard it as a matter of high urgency. The Government recognise the serious problem. We are addressing that problem. We will, I hope, come forward with proposals soon. I also hope that the proposals will be couched in such terms as to appeal to Opposition Members.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 1 July 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL

To be considered tomorrow.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

SELECTION

Ordered,

That Mr. David Alton, Mr. Donald Coleman, Mr. Ken Eastham, Sir Marcus Fox, Sir Anthony Grant, Sir Fergus Montgomery, Mr. Ray Powell, Sir Michael Shaw and Sir John Stradling Thomas be Members of the Committee of Selection.

Ordered,

That the members of the Committee of Selection nominated this day shall continue to be members of the Committee for the remainder of this Parliament.

Ordered,

That this Order by a Standing Order of the House.—
[Mr. David Hunt.]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Fiji

1. Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Fiji.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I expressed our deep concern about the military coup in Fiji on 14 May, calling for a return to parliamentary democracy. The governor-general has assumed sole executive authority in Fiji. We have maintained normal contact with him through our high commissioner in Suva. Our normal commercial and trading relations continue, as does our aid programme.

Mr. Anderson: A legitimately elected Commonwealth Government have been overthrown by a military coup and the Government have given no continuing views of their disapproval of that coup. Why have the Government not been firmer in their expressions of disapproval, and what instructions have been given to our high commission staff in Fiji, first, relating to the new Administration and, secondly, in their relations with members of the ousted Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have made our view about the coup, as I have just explained, very clear on a number of occasions. For example, some short time afterwards I met the Indian Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Natwar Singh. We both explained that we looked for the swift restoration of parliamentary democracy on the basis of the 1970 constitution for an outcome that preserved the stability of Fiji and harmony among the different communities. It is that that the governor-general is seeking to promote, having declared the office of Prime Minister and other Government positions vacant, and it is that that obviously our high commissioner is now operating in relation to the Government and to the governor-general.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will not our own democratic credentials be questioned when the people of Fiji and Vanuatu learn that the driver of the high commissioner's car, registration number CDUK 1, was instructed by the high commissioner to circulate throughout the islands and deliver Conservative party abusive propaganda against the Labour party to British residents of those islands, and also to seek money to finance the Conservative party campaign at the last election in the form of a letter signed by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit)? It was circulated by a British civil servant. Why is this practice not condemned? Should it not be against the law, and when will some action be taken about this abuse by civil servants?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The question has nothing to do with Fiji. It appears to relate to an excellent document making a very powerful case. The point made by the hon. Gentleman is the subject of a question that he has tabled for answer much later on the Order Paper—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Five of them.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Five? That is characteristic of the hon. Gentleman's extravagance. They will be answered in due course.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Reverting to the original question, may I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to keep in touch with other countries in the area, such as Australia and New Zealand, which have also taken a sensible line on this issue? Will he give a clear message of support to the governor-general, who has been dealing with great competence with an extremely difficult matter? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that that same governor-general has a good record of fighting terrorism in Malaya?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We are keeping in touch with the Governments in the region to whom he referred. I entirely endorse what he said about the importance and difficulty of the task being undertaken by the governor-general and the extent to which he has our admiration. He has now assumed sole executive authority and is seeking to promote elections which will lead to the restoration of a democratic regime in due course.

Cultural Diplomacy

2. Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy on cultural diplomacy.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): Cultural

diplomacy is a valuable part of our continuing promotion of British interests and values worldwide. Our policy was set out in some detail in a memorandum to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Key: I thank my hon. Friend. Does he agree that our language and culture should be encouraged overseas for their own sake? As the Select Committee report recommends, does he agree that an enhanced cultural diplomacy budget should specifically be set aside, especially for the BBC external services and the British Council?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with my hon. Friend that the promotion of our culture plays an important part in our general diplomatic effort overseas. I prefer not to be drawn into commenting at this stage on the Select Committee report. We shall study and respond to it in the normal course of events.

Mr. Tony Banks: Has the Minister studied the speech made by Sir John Burgh, the retiring director general of the British Council, who said that the Conservative Government had completely let down British culture by making a 21 per cent. cut in the budget of the British Council? Why have the Government betrayed British culture abroad, and what do they intend to do about it?

Mr. Eggar: I was present when Sir John Burgh was making that lecture, and I am sure that he will not thank the hon. Gentleman for that crude caricature of what was an interesting speech.

Sir Peter Blaker: Does my hon. Friend recall the wide support in the previous Parliament for the proposal for a British world television news service? Is he in a position to state the Government's view on the matter?

Mr. Eggar: We are aware of the opportunities that are offered by satellite television broadcasting, and British television enterprises are actively involved in this. I think especially of the ITN service. My right hon. Friend's question raises several fundamental issues which we are continuing to study carefully.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Minister agree that international sporting links should be an integral part of the Government's policy on cultural diplomacy? Bearing in mind the Government's attempted boycott of the Moscow Olympics, why is there a deafening silence on the need to find an alternative venue for the next Olympics, since the puppet regime in South Korea has one of the worst records in the world on the deprivation of human rights?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman has the most extraordinary set of priorities. I should have thought that he would welcome the movement towards democracy that has been promised by the President of Korea.

Mr. Hayes: Does my hon. Friend agree that the BBC external service is often the only source of truth and hope in many countries where people have been deprived of their liberties? Will he do all that he can to thwart attempts by the Treasury to impose financial restraints?

Mr. Eggar: The BBC external service has done very well in recent years. Since 1979-80 there has been a real increase of more than 50 per cent. in grant in aid.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister stop blustering about the remarks made by Sir John Burgh, which my hon.

Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) repeated? Will he confirm that the budget of the British Council has been reduced by 21 per cent. in real terms since the Conservatives took office? Will he also confirm that Sir John Burgh said that that may mean, if it continues, that the British Council will have to pull out of nine countries by 1991 unless the cuts are reversed? What will the Minister do to reverse that trend and support the work of the British Council overseas?

Mr. Eggar: Again I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I am sorry that he was not present when Sir John Burgh made his interesting speech. — [Interruption.] The hon. Gentleman's points are different from those made in Sir John Burgh's speech. The British Council's requirements are considered along with other requirements in the context of the annual public expenditure survey. We cannot prejudge the outcome of that survey.

Iran

3. **Mr. Grylls** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's response to Iran's failure to respect diplomatic immunity.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I told the House on 26 June, our firm response to Iran's failure to respect Mr. Chaplin's full diplomatic immunity was designed to bring home to the Iranians the seriousness with which we, and indeed the whole international community, viewed their action. Regrettably, the Iranians responded in a severe and unjustified manner.

This crisis in relations was not of our making. We are prepared to rebuild a constructive relationship. However, we are interested in the substance of relations between states, not merely the husk, and must be assured that the Iranians will respect the inviolability of our diplomats.

Mr. Grylls: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many people in Britain and throughout the world will feel safer as a result of the resolute stand that he has taken against terrorism and against the maltreatment of diplomats whose sole duty, does my right hon. and learned Friend not agree, is to serve their country and nothing else?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I remind him that the purpose of diplomatic immunity is not to protect diplomats, but to protect their work on behalf of the people of this country.

Mr. Beith: In the light of the mounting evidence that Iran is not merely failing to respect diplomatic immunity, but is orchestrating the kidnapping of innocent hostages, is it not slightly illogical that nominally we still have diplomatic relations with Iran, but do not have such relations with Syria, which to some extent has sought to put its house in order on such matters? If the Foreign Secretary believes that maintaining the vestige of diplomatic relations may help to deal with the problems that we face with Iran, would that not also be more helpful in a situation where the Syrian Government have at last taken steps to make changes in those matters that greatly concern us?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Each of those cases must be considered separately on the facts and evidence available. There was no doubt that the conduct that led to the rupture of relations with Syria was wholly justified, and no

one dissented then. It is true that there is some evidence that the Syrians are making some changes in Syria at the moment. However, they do not go far enough by any means to satisfy our requests for the abandonment of support for terrorism. With regard to Iran, the evidence is different. The conduct that led to the present state of affairs, although outrageous and unacceptable, was not in the same category as that which led to the breaking of relations with Syria. That is why we must distinguish between the two cases.

Mr. Dalyell: What is the Government's policy towards the supply of arms to Islamic fundamentalist groups?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That situation is not very frequently likely to arise. However, the supply of arms in all circumstances is subject to the comprehensive control by means of licensing and approval in the ordinary way.

Mr. Couchman: While I understand the actions that my right hon. and learned Friend has taken in virtually breaking off diplomatic relations with Iran, what arrangements will be made for those people trying to leave Iran to come to this country, for example for medical treatment, who may have relatives in this country and who are at present finding great difficulty leaving that country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The rundown in the scale of our presence in Iran must lead to the virtual suspension of the availability of visas. The position was such that the Iranian authorities were seeking to reduce our representation to nothing more than a visa-issuing factory, with the removal of reality from the relationship. Arrangements are made for visas to be available from other posts and special attention will be given, so far as possible, to cases on compassionate grounds or those of real urgency.

Mr. Robertson: Why did we allow ourselves to be messed around, with the humiliation that was imposed by the Iranians on us and our diplomats? Why did we not immediately close down the Iranians' arms sales office at 4 Victoria street? Is this country so pathetically desperate for any trade with Iran that those people just across the road from this building can continue to buy and sell vast amounts of armaments for the war between Iran and Iraq, while our diplomatic personnel are beaten up and thrown out of Iran?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has approached this matter in a characteristically exaggerated and distorted fashion. The Iranian military purchasing offices are conducting purely commercial operations, which must operate within the confines of British law. This dispute was confined to a consular and diplomatic matter, and it would be wrong, for the sake of British industry and jobs, to disregard the fact that in other respects we still have a substantial export trade with Iran, which is conducted entirely within the law.

North Atlantic Council

4. **Miss Fookes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the North Atlantic Council meeting at Reykjavik on 11 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I told the House on 26 June, the conclusions that were reached at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Reykjavik were a notable fulfilment of our efforts to promote a real improvement in East-West

relations. The United Kingdom was one of the main architects of the agreement that was reached at Reykjavik on the double zero option on intermediate nuclear forces. We have also played a central role in preparations within the Alliance for negotiations on achieving a better conventional balance. The Reykjavik communiqué confirmed the Alliance's arms control policies that were set out last December. A copy of the communiqué has been placed in the Library of the House.

Miss Fookes: Will my right hon. and learned Friend say whether any consideration was given to the control of chemical weapons, in which, I believe, the Soviet Union has a marked superiority over the West?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes, that was identified, as it had been in the earlier NATO communiqué, as one of the high priorities for progress. We wish to achieve a worldwide ban on chemical weapons. Last year, encouraging progress was made under the United Kingdom chairmanship of the negotiations. As my hon. Friend points out, this is an important matter, because the Soviet Union retains large stocks of chemical weapons, together with comprehensively trained and equipped forces.

Mr. Cartwright: As the North Atlantic Council has endorsed the dual zero negotiations on intermediate nuclear weapons, why should that process not be extended to the most dangerous class of nuclear weapons, the battlefield systems? Why do the Government not endorse the concept of NATO and the Warsaw pact negotiating mutual and balanced reductions in the substantial numbers of these weapons that are now deployed in central Europe?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We are seeking to achieve progress on conventional arms control, and that was one of the four priorities that were identified in the communiqué. However, battlefield nuclear weapons form no part of the conventional armoury and there is no question of contemplating reductions in the United States and Soviet land-based nuclear missiles with a range of under 500 km, except in conjunction with the establishment of a conventional balance and the global elimination of chemical weapons.

Mr. Hill: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the most serious aspects of any double zero option is the verification after the agreement? Therefore, does he agree that the expertise of the seven nations group of the Western European Union on verification of armaments, which was formed after the last world war, should be used to its full?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have no doubt that that capacity should be used as far as it can be. My hon. Friend is absolutely right in saying that a rigorous and effective system of verification is essential. That remains an important part of the negotiations, which still have to be resolved.

Mr. Healey: Can the Foreign Secretary assure the House that his Government will not seek — [HON. MEMBERS: "Back again?"] May I allay the alarm on the Government Benches—[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a great pleasure to see the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Healey: I simply want to assure the House that I have returned to the Opposition Front Bench not in

response to overwhelming public demand or in order to receive more premature obituaries, but because I have another week to go.

Will the Foreign Secretary assure the House that Her Majesty's Government will not seek to circumvent the welcome agreement endorsed at Reykjavik to remove two classes of nuclear missiles from Europe by introducing new cruise missiles to Britain on submarines or aircraft, as proposed by the NATO Defence Ministers just before Reykjavik? Will the Government agree to withdraw the American warheads from the Pershing 1A missiles in Germany if the Soviet Union agrees to abandon the proposal which it agreed with Washington on the retention of 100 nuclear warheads in Asia and the United States?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The agreement, as sought and so far presented, has not been extended to cover PIA weapons in Germany. It is intended to cover United States and Soviet systems only.

In answer to the first part of the right hon. Gentleman's question, the Alliance is totally committed to achieving an INF agreement. In that context it continually assesses its nuclear capabilities and makes whatever adjustments are necessary to maintain deterrence. Obviously, an INF agreement would be taken into account in that continuing process.

Arms Control

5. **Mr. Forman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's position on arms control negotiations.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): There has been significant progress in recent weeks in the United States/Soviet negotiations on intermediate range nuclear missiles. I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend has just given about developments at Reykjavik.

On conventional weapons, informal contacts between NATO and Warsaw pact representatives have been under way in Vienna since mid-February on the terms of reference for new talks on conventional stability covering the Atlantic to the Urals. Steady progress is being made.

Mr. Forman: I welcome the progress in the INF negotiations, but can my hon. and learned Friend confirm that the Government's view is that agreement should be concluded if possible by the end of this year? In the interests of meeting such a timetable, do the Government believe that it would be unwise to attach too many conditions to the free standing and balanced INF agreement by attaching conditions to conventional or chemical weaponry, important though it is to make progress on those issues separately?

Mr. Mellor: Plainly, it is important that a proper balanced view be taken on all these matters. I hope, as the whole House will hope, that proper speed is made in all these negotiations, but in no sense do I think that we should be tied to any arbitrary timetable.

Mrs. Clwyd: Why are the Government continuing to support PIA in West Germany when it is both militarily useless and politically obstructive to a historic breakthrough in arms control agreements?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Lady speaks with great assertion on matters on which one suspects she is not as expert as she claims. The reality — [Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mellor: It is interesting that — [Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is supposed to be about diplomatic exchanges.

Mr. Mellor: It is interesting that the hon. Lady chooses to seize upon indications that the Soviet Union introduced into the discussions very late on; indeed, only a few months ago. Before that it had been accepted that the arrangements whereby the West Germans have this rocketry and the Alliance fits the warheads stood outside these negotiations. The hon. Lady would play the British card better if she recognised that this was a spurious negotiating gambit by the Soviets and did not leap in as voice and echo to everything that Mr. Gorbachev said.

Mr. Soames: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that, as there is not one shred of evidence of any change in Russian expansionist foreign policy, he should go extremely carefully in the arms control talks?

Mr. Mellor: That is unquestionably right.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Why did the Foreign Secretary try to intervene in New Zealand's arms control policy at his press conference there in May, and what is felt to have been the outcome of that?

Mr. Mellor: I think that the right hon. Gentleman should direct that question specifically to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Wilkinson: I congratulate my hon. and learned Friend on his new appointment. As an early priority, will he read the excellent article by General Bernard Rogers in Monday's international *Herald Tribune*, which rightly points out that our spectrum of deterrence — our graduation of deterrence — will be diminished by the elimination of intermediate nuclear force systems? Will my hon. and learned Friend always bear in mind that arms control negotiations are not an end in themselves, but that their purpose is to enhance security?

Mr. Mellor: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's last point. I would add that for some time past what General Rogers has been saying has been worthy of the most serious consideration, and certainly it will always get that consideration from me.

Mr. Robertson: It would be normal to welcome a new Minister to the Dispatch Box, but this new Minister has managed in a few seconds to make us instantly and amazingly nostalgic for his hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), who preceded him. He at least had some expertise in these matters and would never have stooped to this sort of cheap jibe.

Let me test the hon. and learned Gentleman's instant expertise by asking him whether he can tell the House of any scientific opinion at all in the world that still supports the British Government's objections to a test ban treaty — an objection that is still based on difficulties with verification? When will the Government abandon this totally discredited objection to such a treaty, or are they going to wait yet again for the United States Congress to come to their assistance and let them off the hook?

Mr. Mellor: It is good to feel at home, being savaged by a dead haggis. The British Government's position on this, as on all other aspects of disarmament and defence, commands a great deal more support, both at home and abroad, than is suggested by Opposition Members, who, after their third successive election defeat, should learn a little humility on these matters.

Iran-Iraq War

6. Mr. Andrew Mackay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest position in the Iran-Iraq war.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I told the House on 26 June, we are most concerned that this tragic conflict continues after almost seven years. We are continuing to play a constructive role in discussions in New York aimed at finding a negotiated settlement.

Mr. Mackay: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take the opportunity to put the mind of the House at rest on two points? First, will he assure us that every possible action is being taken to ensure that British shipping in the Gulf is being adequately protected; and secondly, that under no circumstances are arms being sold to either of the combatants?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Our policy on the sale of arms is well known. We refuse to sell to either side defence equipment which would significantly enhance its capability to prolong or exacerbate the conflict. That policy has brought us no thanks from either side, but we believe that it is appreciated by the wider international community. To protect our shipping, we maintain the Armilla patrol in the area to offer reassurance and help British ships in an emergency. We keep the operations of that patrol under constant review in the light of changing circumstances. Since January about 120 merchant ships in transit through the Straits of Hormuz have been covered by ships of the Armilla patrol.

Mr. Rooker: That being so, may I ask the Foreign Secretary why, in answer to question 3, he sought to boast at the Dispatch Box about the number of British jobs protected by the immorality of allowing the office at 4 Victoria street to continue? How can he make that boast, but at the same time say that the Government are not doing anything to prolong the war? Either we are selling a lot of arms to protect a lot of jobs by maintaining that office in Victoria street, or we are not.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman's question is naive, even for him—[*Interruption.*] Let me make the position clear. There is a total ban on arms sales along the lines that I have described. That has been firmly maintained for a number of years. However, there is still ample scope for commercial trade unrelated to arms. That commercial trade sustains a large number of jobs in British industry and is of great importance. I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman does not care about that.

Mr. Dickens: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that within the Iranian consulate in Manchester there were those who were IRA sympathisers and who joined in IRA marches in London and Dublin? Is it not possible that if we had not closed that consulate in Manchester we would have found that some of the weapons that were being used

Mr. Dickens: I am now saying: is it not possible that some of the weapons that are being used in the Iran-Iraq war could find their way into Northern Ireland?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I suppose that all things are possible, but it is a rather remote question from the one before the House.

Mr. Healey: Bearing in mind the disastrous history of the multi-national force in Lebanon and the stupefying confusion of recent American policy towards Iran, can the Foreign Secretary assure the House that the Royal Navy will not be ordered or allowed to join in the provocative American actions in the Gulf and that Her Majesty's Government will instead seek, through the United Nations, international protection for shipping in the international waters of the Gulf under the aegis of the Security Council?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot follow the right hon. Gentleman in the terms in which he opened his question. He knows perfectly well that it is our intention to see that all people concerned exercise the utmost restraint in this area and refrain from any action that might lead to a further escalation and a widening of the dispute. Our Navy and the French Navy are present for the purposes that I have described. They keep in close touch with each other and with the United States Navy. However, there is no question or intention of formal integration. We shall continue to promote the action that I described in the original answer at the United Nations and elsewhere to try to bring the conflict to a close.

Soviet Union

7. Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning Her Majesty's Government's latest information on human rights violations in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Mellor: We have welcomed the release of dissidents earlier this year and the recent increase in the rate of Jewish emigration. We hope that the amnesty announced on 18 June will lead to further releases. We remain concerned, however, about the many still unjustly detained in prisons and psychiatric hospitals and the thousands who are being denied the right to leave their country. We shall continue to press the Soviet authorities on these matters, both in bilateral contacts and at the conference on security co-operation in Europe Vienna meeting.

Mr. Chapman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information. Can he confirm that the practical, beneficial effect of the much-proclaimed policy of glasnost has led to more Soviet Jews who wish to do so being able to leave the Soviet Union? Will my hon. Friend pay tribute to the many individuals and organisations in this country who are trying to make personal contact with people in the Soviet Union who are denied basic human rights, in an attempt to keep their hopes high and to bring to the attention of a wider public the human tragedy involved in such policy within the Soviet Union?

Mr. Mellor: I had the opportunity of saying almost precisely that to the chairman of the British Council for Soviet Jewry at our meeting yesterday. I look forward to giving a similar commendation on the efforts of so many, including many Members of this House, at a conference on this topic next week.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a mile wide of the conflict.

The welcome fact is that, taking the June provisional figures into account, the number of Soviet Jews who were allowed to leave the Soviet Union in the first six months of this year stands at around 3,000. That is more than the total number of those allowed to emigrate in the past three years taken together. My hon. Friend will be aware that problems and difficulties still lie ahead, but that figure represents a welcome development.

Mr. Grocott: While it is of course right that we make representations on human rights violations whenever they occur, is it not high time that the Government recognised that there is a new mood of reform in the Soviet Union? May we ask the Government to act entirely out of character and respond to that mood of reform positively and sympathetically?

Mr. Mellor: Of course we respond, but the best form of response is not just to roll over and forget about all the difficulties that we know exist and will continue to exist. Naivety has no part in these matters.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that the increase in the number of people leaving the Soviet Union is as nothing compared with the 400,000 who are in receipt of invitations to do so?

Mr. Mellor: I congratulate my hon. Friend, who has been a very distinguished Member of the European Parliament for some time, on his election to the House. I also congratulate him on asking a question that hits the centre of the target of our concerns. It is certainly true that there has been an increase in the number of exits permitted this year to those established refusniks, but there remains a much larger group of people who have been invited to come here and who are now subject to the restrictions imposed by the Soviet Union in January—restrictions of a new and fresh kind. If those restrictions are rigorously imposed and result in the refusal of a substantial number of those people to leave, that will pose a major obstacle to proceedings between our two countries.

Mr. Mullin: Would it not be possible to take the Government's posturing on human rights in the Soviet Union more seriously if they were willing to extend an amnesty to the six innocent men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings, who have now been in prison in this country for 14 years?

Mr. Mellor: Although I know, from my previous incarnation, of the hon. Gentleman's interest in that case, his is not a worthy question. He knows full well that the case is now subject to reconsideration by the Court of Appeal, and that no such liability to reconsideration exists in the Soviet Union for any of the people with whom we are concerned.

Gulf Shipping

8. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's commitment to the protection of its national shipping in the Gulf; and what information he has about the equivalent commitment of other nations in the Gulf.

Mr. Mellor: As reiterated most recently at Venice, we are firmly committed to the principle of freedom of navigation in the Gulf.

The Royal Navy has maintained a continuous presence in the Gulf since 1980. Since January about 120 merchant

ships in transit through the Straits of Hormuz have been covered by ships of the Armilla patrol. Also since January three warships have been deployed in the region. The United States and the USSR are in the process of increasing their naval presence in the Gulf in the light of their commitment to protect Kuwaiti tankers. The French also patrol in the Gulf from time to time.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Has not the President of the United States drawn attention to the fact that the contribution of the Royal Navy is proportionally greater than that of any other power? Does not the Royal Navy deserve the thanks of the House for the job that it is doing, entirely without fuss?

Mr. Mellor: I associate myself entirely with every particular of what my hon. Friend has said, and I hope that the whole House will do so.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: While recognising the role played by the Royal Navy, may I ask whether the Minister agrees that the American attempt to exclude the Soviet Union from the Gulf—that is certainly how matters appear—is very dangerous? Will he urge the United States to work in co-operation with the Soviet Navy in that area? This is not merely a matter of American self-interest; it is in the interest of the whole world.

Mr. Mellor: There is no doubt that major extensions of superpower rivalry would be troubling. The Government are very well aware of that.

South Africa

9. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the South African Government regarding the release of political detainees.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): We have repeatedly made clear to the South African Government our deep concern at the continuing detentions without charge. We have done so both bilaterally and together with our European partners.

Mr. Pike: While accepting what the Minister has said, may I ask how the British Government intend to make the South African Government realise that we want to see positive steps towards ending the policy of apartheid in that country? One of the important prerequisites of that is the release of all political detainees. How will the Government spell out the message so that the South African Government understand and act on it?

Mrs. Chalker: We have made repeated representations to the South African Government, not only about detainees, but about all the other issues that have arisen in recent months and years. We shall continue to impress upon the South African Government the need to bring people together around the conference table so that together they can work out a future constitution. There is no way in which we can bring about change from outside. The changes that are needed in South Africa to abandon apartheid totally have to come from within, and we shall use all our diplomatic efforts, with the Twelve and with the Commonwealth, to bring that about.

Mr. Hunter: In the light of what my right hon. Friend has said, will she please explain her apparent reluctance to

enter into a dialogue with the leaders of the black homelands in South Africa, who represent moderation in that country? If she is not reluctant, will she please refute that allegation?

Mrs. Chalker: I think my hon. Friend knows very well that the so-called independent homelands in South Africa are a key element in what is known as grand apartheid. They are bitterly resented by most black South Africans. Neither we nor any other state have recognised the so-called independent homelands. We believe that no British interests would be served by recognising any of them. The historical background does not alter the present facts. Even fellow Tswanas in Botswana do not recognise Bophuthatswana. It is simply not possible for us to have the sort of official dealings that my hon. Friend would like, without the risk of appearing to recognise such a homeland as an independent state. It would do nothing to bring about the end of apartheid. If I thought that it would do so, we might change our ideas.

Mr. Battle: In the light of the post-election message of congratulation from President Botha, did the Prime Minister mention detainees in her reply?

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister received a large number of letters from Heads of State as a result of the election. There was nothing out of the ordinary either in the letter that was sent or in the reply, a copy of which I do not have to hand.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my right hon. Friend accept that internal security matters in South Africa are for the South African Government, not for our Government? Will she also accept that while certain political detainees are detained, and while the state of emergency exists, peace has returned to the black townships and that people can go about their lives normally, apart from the murderous intent of the African National Congress and others who are bent on disruption?

Mrs. Chalker: Internal matters are for the South African Government, but I think my hon. Friend knows well enough that the concern of the House and of thousands of people outside it about those who are detained without charge is very real. It is something that we have never espoused in this country, nor do we think that it should happen in other countries. We regret the renewed state of emergency in South Africa, because it is no answer to South Africa's problems. The South African Government need to engage in a dialogue with free and freely chosen representatives of black opinion. That is the first necessary step on the path to a peaceful solution that we all wish to see. Nothing is gained by throwing brickbats in the way that some would have us do.

Mr. Anderson: Although repression in South Africa is censored and does not appear on our television screens, does the Minister agree that, as was confirmed recently by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, repression there is at an unprecedented level and that it includes the detention and torture of children? In the light of that, why do the Government continue to give aid and support in the United Nations to the apartheid régime, and why do they protect South Africa in the Security Council by the continued use of their veto?

Mrs. Chalker: There is no protection of the South African Government in the United Nations by this country. We are deeply concerned about the allegations in

the recent report "Children under Apartheid". Although the South African police have denied those allegations, I understand that the South African Deputy Minister for Law and Order has said that such allegations, if true, are horrendous. No doubt, over time we shall hear more about them. The allegations refer to a time past. We hope that if any children are still retained in detention they will be freed by the South African Government.

Venice Summit

10. Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent British objectives were achieved at the Venice summit in June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We sought a continuing commitment by all summit countries to the collective pursuit of economic policies designed to produce sustained non-inflationary growth in the world economy. We also sought renewed commitments to the liberalisation of trade and resistance to protectionism, the reform of agricultural policies, and the economic progress of developing countries, including special help for Africa. We endorsed summit statements on terrorism, East-West relations and the Iran-Iraq war. Our objectives for Venice were met in full.

Mr. Gale: Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House what progress was made in discussions relating to food surpluses?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is entirely right to draw attention to that matter. There has been sustained and encouraging progress in the past year. The communiqués of the Tokyo summit, as well as the meetings held at Punta del Este and the OECD in Paris this summer, preceded the strong requirements of the communiqués from Venice. Moreover, we are seeing worthwhile progress in the European Community in price reductions. For example, there was a 10 per cent. reduction in grain prices last night. The next step will be taken at the GATT, where we shall table comprehensive proposals for the dismantling of agricultural protection. The tide is running for reform. That tide is being sustained by the imperatives of budgetary discipline. We have to keep it moving.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Secretary of State elaborate on the endorsement of the campaign against terrorism, especially as we have yet to have delivered extradition proceedings from the Republic of Ireland—allegedly because of the miscarriage of justice in English courts—and British subjects continue to be murdered in Northern Ireland?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right to draw attention to the fact that the campaign against terrorism has to be sustained in every quarter in which it is a scourge of the community, as it certainly is in Northern Ireland. He will no doubt welcome the fact that the Prime Minister met the Taoiseach yesterday in Brussels. They agreed on the great importance of continued co-operation in the campaign against terrorism.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Bearing in mind the genuine concern about the problems of the poorest countries, particularly the debt problems of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and bearing in mind that such matters were discussed by Heads of Government at the recent Venice

summit, will my right hon. and learned Friend say a little more about initiatives that are about to be taken or are being taken?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the importance of the matter. The summit, recognised in particular the debt problems of the poorest countries, particularly in Africa, where they were identified as uniquely difficult and calling for special treatment. We were encouraged by the support given at the summit for the Chancellor of the Exchequer's three-point plan for special assistance for certain countries.

Mr. Frank Cook: Was the Secretary of State able to make reference at the summit to the British objectives in relation to the situation in the Korean peninsula? Was he able to remind our allies that we have been in a state of armistice there for almost 35 years? Was he able to recall that we have to maintain a garrison in South Korea to uphold what is clearly a subversive and decadent regime?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has linked a number of topics. The House will welcome the announcement that was made in recent days of the changes that are in prospect in the Republic of Korea. He is right to say that there is a small, token detachment of British troops in the Republic of Korea whose function, among other things, is to commemorate the great heroism of British troops, including in particular the Gloucester Regiment, in the Korean war some years ago. There was some discussion at Venice of the problems of Korea, when we reaffirmed our desire to see progress in the sporadic attempts to achieve some kind of reconciliation between the two countries on the peninsula.

Nicaragua

11. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the United States Government about the level of their support for the Contra forces in Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: We regularly discuss important issues, including the situation in Central America, with the United States Administration, and they are fully aware of our views.

Mr. Banks: May I draw the Minister's attention to early-day motion 9, which points out that on 27 June 1986 the world court found that the United States Government were guilty, on no fewer than eight counts, of offending international law in respect of supplying arms to the Contras and their actions on Nicaragua? What will the Government do, in terms of the much-vaunted special relationship that appears, or is said, to exist between this country and the United States, to ask the United States Government when they will conform with the rulings of the international court? When will this country stop indirectly supplying arms to the Contra forces, as the Minister knows we are doing?

Mr. Eggar: There is no truth in the hon. Gentleman's wild allegations. I wish that he would withdraw such assertions, which he insists on making across the Floor of the House and for which he has no evidence whatsoever.

Mr. Baldry: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the only way to solve the problems of Central America is by

political initiatives and not by armed force, and that the best way forward must still lie in the Contadora peace process?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The way to solve the problems in Central America is by working through the Contadora process rather than through military solutions.

Mr. Foulkes: How can the Minister state so categorically that the Blowpipe missiles that are now impounded in Panama in the ship *Per Evesta* were not destined for the Contras, in spite of the evidence of the Tower commission? As there is now evidence of Blowpipe missiles being supplied to the Afghan rebels also, why is Shorts, which is owned and controlled by the Government, allowed to continue to supply Blowpipe missiles behind a wall of silence?

Mr. Eggar: I might have hoped that the hon. Gentleman would have had more chance to come to terms with the reality of the situation. We are not supplying arms to the Contra rebels. We have said that quite clearly. The hon. Gentleman has had four weeks off and should not give rein to his fantasies in such a manner.

South Africa

12. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the newly-appointed ambassador from the Republic of South Africa; and what was discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has not yet had any formal discussions with the new South African ambassador since his appointment, but he expects to do so soon. I met the ambassador on 22 April last.

Mr. Colvin: When my right hon. Friend meets the new ambassador formally, will she put on the agenda the independence of Namibia? Does she agree that the start of negotiations for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola would be a significant step towards the implementation of Security Council resolution 435?

Mrs. Chalker: I can assure my hon. Friend that when my right hon. and learned Friend meets the South African ambassador he will consider Namibian independence. We remain committed to the United Nations Security Council resolution 435. It is the only internationally acceptable basis for a Namibian settlement. We have recently reminded the South African Government of the need for its early implementation. However, we have not set preconditions for the implementation of resolution 435, nor has the United Nations. We recognise that withdrawal of all foreign troops from Angola and Namibia would create the best possible conditions for a lasting settlement. We welcome the prospect of renewed United States-Angolan negotiations and will discuss that with Dr. Crocker later today.

Mr. Tom Clarke: When the Minister's right hon. and learned Friend takes part in such a meeting, will he express the distaste of the people of this country for South Africa's undermining and destabilising of the front-line states, most noticeably and most recently in Mozambique and Botswana?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman already knows that no violence across borders, by whomsoever it is

committed, is likely to solve the grave problems of southern Africa. Indeed, whenever there is an incursion into another country, it is deprecated.

Hong Kong

13. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to maintain stability in Hong Kong; and what is his policy on discussing any proposed constitutional changes in the colony with the Government of the People's Republic of China.

14. **Mr. Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards democratic reform in Hong Kong.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Both we and the Chinese Government have undertaken clear commitments to maintain the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. The excellent progress made by Hong Kong since the signature of the joint declaration on its future is evidence that those commitments have been upheld. We naturally maintain contact with the Chinese Government over a wide range of issues concerning the future of Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong Government published a Green Paper on representative government in May. We hope that all sections of the community in Hong Kong will express their views on the options presented in the Green Paper.

Mr. Adley: As, for nearly 150 years, the Hong Kong constitutional position has been dominated by the

proximity of China, and as the British and Chinese Governments—as my right hon. and learned Friend said—are committed to the maintenance of stability, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that change without the overt consent of the Government in Beijing to the constitutional position in Hong Kong could be dangerous folly? Does my right hon. and learned Friend further agree that the interests of the people of Hong Kong relate far more to the substance of stability than to the shadow of experimentation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is important that there should be convergence between any changes made now and the system that will be in place after 1997. None of the options set out in the Green Paper is inconsistent with that approach. Her Majesty's Government, the Hong Kong Government and the Chinese are engaged in listening to the views of the people of Hong Kong on future constitutional arrangements.

Mr. Atkinson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that in 1997 China will take over the system of government in Hong Kong that will be operating at the time? Does he agree that a referendum would be the best means of determining the views of the Hong Kong people towards the options in the Green Paper?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Plainly, there will have to be continuity between the system of government that is in operation in 1997 and that which takes over immediately thereafter. Obviously, with regard to matters set out in the Green Paper, we are listening to all the representations made to us. It would be wrong of me to anticipate the outcome of that public consultation.

European Council

3.32 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the European Council held in Brussels on 29 and 30 June. I was accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

The main issues before the Council concerned the future financing of the Community. The issues were: to improve budget discipline and management; to reform the operation of the common agricultural policy; the structure and size of the Community's resources; continued progress towards the completion of the single European market; and more effective use of the regional and social funds.

In addition, the Council dealt with three important immediate questions: the 1987 budget, the agricultural price package and the proposed oils and fats tax.

The task of this Council was to agree on guidelines that would lead to the necessary decisions at the next meeting of the Council in December. There was considerable agreement on the steps that have to be taken if we are to resolve the problems of the Community's finances. There were two points, however, with which we could not agree. First, we were not prepared to accept that there should be a decision now on the size of Community resources. We have made it clear throughout the discussions that it is necessary, before that question is addressed, to have agreement on effective and binding control over Community spending, including, in particular, agricultural spending. Secondly, we could not accept that the level from which we start to calculate agricultural spending for the future should be simply revised upwards to include every element of overspending in the current year.

Those are substantive points, on which we have both to protect the taxpayer and to take sound and considered decisions for the long-term health of the Community. They also go to the root of whether the Community is really prepared to tackle the problem of agricultural overspending. We agreed, however, first, that the use of the Community's resources should be subject to effective and binding budgetary discipline; and that this must apply to all expenditure and to all the institutions—the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament. Secondly, on agriculture, we agreed that additional measures are required to stop surplus production, and so to reduce costs and keep expenditure within the budget framework.

These reforms could be accompanied by measures to ensure some setting aside of agricultural land, less intensive farming and, in certain circumstances, by selective financial aids within a Community framework. Thirdly, we agreed that arrangements for the United Kingdom to receive an abatement will continue. So far as we are concerned, they must be at least as favourable as those in effect now.

During the rest of this year, the Community has the opportunity — indeed, the task — of translating the guidelines on budget discipline and on agriculture into draft decisions and regulations for our consideration at the December Council.

The Council reaffirmed the importance which we attach to meeting the target of removing, by 1992, the remaining barriers to trade within the Common Market. We should look for decisions by the end of 1988 on product

standards, the wider opening of public contracts, the liberalisation of capital movements, insurance, and the mutual recognition of qualifications. These measures, by leading to a freer flow of goods and services and opening up a genuine single market, would help the creation of wealth and jobs.

On research and development, in order not to hinder work on agreed programmes, we proposed that spending could continue at present levels. The question of additional funds falls to be settled later, along with other decisions on future financing.

I made it clear that the United Kingdom would not agree to the new tax on oils and fats, which was proposed by the Commission and supported by France and others. I am glad to tell the House that it was not adopted.

Some detailed, not to say abstruse questions on monetary compensatory amounts on agricultural products were submitted to the Council. There was concern about how some aspects of those would operate in practice. It was therefore agreed that they should be re-examined by 1 July next year. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will deal with these matters more fully in his statement.

On the 1987 budget, the Council agreed to a solution on the lines we have advocated: Community funds for agricultural support, instead of being paid in advance, will now be paid in arrears. The Commission's proposal for an intergovernmental agreement to raise additional funds outside the Community budget was rejected.

We went to the Council determined to make progress in bringing Community spending under more effective control than in the past, and thus to ensure that the Community lives within its means. There are now clear guidelines for better control of the Community's finances. The priority task is for the Community to do the detailed work necessary to make those guidelines enforceable. The United Kingdom, and especially this House, has been the driving force behind this approach. We shall continue our efforts to achieve the necessary decisions in the interests of a soundly financed and strong Community.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Being in a minority in the EEC is not the worst fate that can befall a nation or a Prime Minister if, as a consequence, the negotiating position is enhanced and positive results are achieved. The question is whether that really will be the outcome, when the Prime Minister has said that she is against giving money to bankrupts and then, in Brussels, proceeded to do precisely the opposite. Is not that exactly what she has done this week — first, by agreeing to a messy, makeshift contrivance over this year's £3.5 billion budget deficit, and, secondly, by acceding to an expensive farm price settlement that will add to food surpluses? Will she tell us why, when the crisis of Common Market insolvency is so obvious, pressing and immediate, she did not use that reality to secure the radical reform and effective control on spending that is manifestly needed now?

We have been here so often before that we are beginning to doubt the Prime Minister. Is not the Prime Minister's failure to press home the negotiating advantage that arises from the present insolvency a result of the fact that while she knows what she is against in the budget and in the common agricultural policy, she does not really know what she is for? She has no positive and precise

proposals for the root and branch reform that is needed, of the Common Market and the common agricultural policy.

Will the Prime Minister give us an assurance now that she will veto any proposals to put VAT on any items that are currently zero-rated? Will she guarantee that she will prevent any steps to impose VAT on children's clothing and shoes, on fuel, public transport, new housing and on books and newspapers as well as on food?

The Prime Minister: First, I do not think that anyone would take advice from the right hon. Gentleman about effective control over spending. Secondly, there was more than a full blocking minority against an oils and fats tax. People ought not to agree to an intergovernmental agreement as a means of raising more money to meet the deficit on this year's spending. Therefore, it was met in other ways that have been set out in documents that are now in the Library, and those ways are infinitely better.

Thirdly, as the right hon. Gentleman should be aware, there have been and will continue to be, further reforms in the common agricultural policy. He will have heard many times of milk quotas and of the reduction in price that there has been for, I think, five or six years in succession. He will also have heard of things such as guaranteed thresholds and limited intervention on things such as set-aside. These measures will continue. A reduction in price is not enough, and that is why there have to be other measures of the kind that I have mentioned.

There were a number of what are called stabiliser proposals at this meeting and in the Agriculture Council, and we are now seeking to get further guidelines on these translated into regulations for each and every commodity. Value added tax was not even mentioned at this meeting, nor was harmonisation of tax even raised either by the Commission or by anyone else. I stand by precisely what I said during the election campaign.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Is my right hon. Friend aware that throughout the last Parliament the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service urged more effective budgetary discipline in the European Community? My right hon. Friend is to be enthusiastically congratulated on the stand that she has taken. Having said that, is it not the case that the present situation has arisen because we have constantly bailed out the EC by way of temporary measures such as intergovernmental agreements and so on? Since loans to the EC are not allowed and there are no intergovernmental proposals to be agreed, could she say whether she will continue to refuse to accept any further temporary finance to bail the EC out of its present crisis?

The Prime Minister: I gladly applaud and acknowledge my right hon. Friend's efforts in trying to get effective guidelines. He and a number of other right hon. and hon. Members made their points clearly soon after Fontainebleau, when we got agreement in the European Council on guidelines to restrain agricultural expenditure. We got the relevant minute, but I am the first to say, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I said in the last two days, that the agreement that we got in the European Council was not translated into practice by the Agriculture Council nor by the European Council, although we have frequently been trying to get down the amount of spending on the common agricultural policy and on other matters as well. Therefore, this time

we said that before we could consider an increase in own resources, those guidelines must be translated into regulations of one kind so that they can be legally enforceable. That is the task that we face between now and the December Council, and according to how that task is performed we shall have to consider what further steps to take.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Prime Minister confirm that all the other 11 Heads of Government were out of step with her on the package of proposals and that she put forward no alternative package to the one that they had agreed? Does she also accept that agreement on the single market that she supports and that we support is likely to be blocked by others if we do not agree to progress on development of the structural funds? Will she also accept that every time the Council of Ministers fails to reach an agreement the budgetary problems simply get worse and that the lack of an expanded research and development programme, for example, simply weakens the Community? Finally, does she believe that the reforms of the CAP, that we all agree are needed, can only be made on the basis of an immediate reduction in total cost? Is that her view and, if so, has she told her Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that?

The Prime Minister: I do not know whether the right hon. Gentleman listened carefully to what I said. A number of things were agreed. We could put out the oils and fats tax only with a full blocking minority. Indeed, more than a blocking minority was obtained and rather more than that was obtained against an intergovernmental agreement. If one takes seriously what the right hon. Gentleman says, it seems he agrees with the other 11 that we should have the agriculture price guide for the future at a bloated level increased by all of the exceptional circumstances this year—the price of the dollar and the disposal of agriculture surpluses, all of which have gone into the bloated level. He wants us to agree to that, thus increasing the CAP expenditure, when he says that he wants to reduce it. Moreover, he asks us to agree to that without any discussion in the European Council, which is what they have refused. He asks us to agree to the other point I raised—an immediate increase in the ceiling of own resources paid to the Community without discussion and without effective financial guidelines. Those were the two points that my right hon. Friend and I refused to agree upon.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the vast majority of people would applaud the strong stand she has taken on extra money for the EEC budget? Is it not wrong that the British taxpayer should provide money to help the political ambitions of some continental politicians over agriculture? Does she not agree that if the EEC budget is increased, this will merely exacerbate and exaggerate the surplus we have in the EEC? This is the one thing we have to eliminate. Consequently, nothing should be done with British taxpayers' money that would in any way increase any surplus in the EEC.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has gone to the heart of our case at the Council. Before any money is voted for an increase in the resources of the EEC we must be certain that there will be more reforms in the common agricultural policy and in other spending. That must not

[The Prime Minister]

be merely embodied in a Council minute, as it has been in the past. It must be enforceable by being put into regulations. That was one of the main differences between ourselves and other people. We want to be certain that that will happen before we look at an increase in own resources. Then we can look at that possible increase in the light of perhaps other means to increase expenditure on things such as research and development. However, because the CAP is now taking up so much, it is not possible to do that.

It is not always easy in the European Council, because nine members of the Council profit financially from being in the Community, as well as profiting in other ways, whereas three of us put in net contributions that are redistributed among the rest of the nine. Naturally, there is always a greater demand for increased expenditure than there is defence against it. We must be certain of the purposes for which it is required.

Mr. James Molyneux (Lagan Valley): In fully supporting the Prime Minister's demand for realism, may I ask whether she received the full-hearted support of the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic in view of that unique relationship which found expression in the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman's arithmetic is impeccable. Since 11 Members were on one side in certain matters and only one on the other, he will find the answer to his question.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Is my right hon. friend aware that she will have the overwhelming support of Conservative Members for the strong stand that she took on the four most important matters at that meeting: the attempt to bring order into the financial affairs of the Community; reform of the common agricultural policy; liberalisation of the internal market; and the rejection of the tax on oils and fats?

The Prime Minister: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend. The stand that we took was right. We want quicker progress towards a single market. After all, it was in the original treaty of Rome. We want to get enforceable order into the Community's finances, and I believe that the other things that we did were right. The Community has been making progress, but it is slower than we would wish. It was very important to ensure that the proposal for an oils and fats tax was not adopted because it would have had a devastating effect on protectionism in world trade. It would have been leading the way in protectionism, which would have been very bad. Moreover, it would have increased the cost of living in this country, especially because of the increase in the price of margarine and cooking oil. It would have been a bad precedent.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): What discussion was there on regional and social fund spending by the Council of Ministers? Does the Prime Minister support the principle that if there is to be a reduction in CAP spending, some of the money should be transferred to the regional and social funds to replace jobs that have been destroyed in agriculture and related industries?

The Prime Minister: There was considerable debate on the amount going into the regional and social funds. Since the Fontainebleau agreement in 1984, there has been a substantial increase in the regional and social funds. For

example, payments from those two funds have increased by 82 per cent. since that time, which represents a 64 per cent. increase in real terms. Nevertheless, some people wanted to double the amount presently spent on them. Naturally, we cannot agree to that, bearing in mind the fact that the Community is already overspent. When we have effective discipline on spending we can consider the various demands on the budget in a proper light.

Mr. Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Despite the fact that my right hon. Friend made it clear that nine of the member states are beneficiaries, is it not a fact that as far back as November 1984 all members of the Council of Ministers agreed that there should be total budget control? Can she give a logical explanation of why the other 11 seem to have reneged on the undertaking that they gave then?

The Prime Minister: We are all beneficiaries from the Common Market. It is the largest trading bloc in the world, and we all benefit in that way. The nine are net financial beneficiaries, and three of us are net contributors. The measures to control expenditure were embodied in the European Council minute. As every hon. Member who represents an agricultural constituency will know, there have been price reductions for many years. There have been milk quotas, which have caused problems in themselves, and there have been limited intervention and limited guaranteed thresholds. Those measures have got surpluses very much lower than they would otherwise have been. Further steps were taken at this meeting. What was not honoured was that the increase in the CAP budget should be less than the increase in own resources. Now we are saying that that must not only be agreed between us but must be enforceable in a regulation.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Prime Minister recall that in the early 1980s she said that the 1 per cent. ceiling should not be breached? But on 14 November 1983, at column 611, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer—now the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—said that the government would be prepared to consider going through that ceiling provided that effective control of the rate of increase in agricultural and other expenditure was achieved.

Does the Prime Minister recall that she came back from Fontainebleau claiming that that effective control had been achieved? Who is conning who? Did the EEC con the Prime Minister or did she con Parliament and the people?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. When we got the agreement at Fontainebleau under which own resources were increased to 1.4 per cent. we received an excellent arrangement for rebate which has meant that since the Fontainebleau agreement £3.2 billion has been returned to us by way of rebate. Part of that came from effective control over spending. As I explained, in a minute to the European Council, that has not proved to be watertight. On the contrary, agricultural spending has gone—[Interruption.] As the hon. Member is aware, agricultural spending is decided by majority and does not have to be unanimous. Because of that experience, we are now trying to enforce the agreements by ensuring that they are translated into financial and other regulations. Before we considered any increase in spending, the 1.4 per cent. had to be considered by the House and was passed by the House. Any increase in relation to value added tax or own resources would also have to be ratified by the House.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to take account of the fact that there are two other statements after this and the last statement is to do with the meeting of the EEC Agriculture Council. No fewer than 56 right hon. and hon. Members including 22 maiden speakers have applied to speak in the subsequent debate. I will therefore allow questions on this matter to continue for another 10 minutes.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that she earned the gratitude of the British people in the stand that she took in Brussels yesterday? Will she tell Monsieur Chirac that it is a pity that there were not more housewives at that important meeting? Would she finally agree that under her Government, Britain has got its finances in order and would it not be better if the other members of the European Community also followed suit?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. Each of us has to apply fairly stringent rules to our finances and that includes many other Ministers present at that European Council meeting. We are saying that stringent rules have to apply to our national financing and they must also be applied to the Common Market financing. That is recognised on both sides of the House. I believe that the Opposition should support us in that objective.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Prime Minister always mentions benefits from this organisation. She admits that the costs are continually soaring. There is a £10 billion deficit in the trade in manufactured goods between the Common Market and the United Kingdom. In spite of the Prime Minister's protestations, food stocks are soaring. What are the benefits? Would not the best benefit be to withdraw from the Common Market?

The Prime Minister: When the internal market is complete we shall enjoy the benefit of a single market which will help all manufacturing. I believe that it is a great benefit to our farming community and therefore to the whole rural economy for us to be a member of the Common Market. It is certainly a very great political benefit. If we were outside the Community with a very powerful group on the continent of Europe, we would be able to feel the draught very clearly.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Has my right hon. Friend seen any perceptible movement among the other Heads of Government towards realising what must now be obvious, that if the common agricultural policy is to support incomes in rural areas rather than the owners of refrigerated warehouses and grain silos, sooner or later quotas will have to come in across the whole spectrum of agricultural produce? How far are we away from grasping and realising that obvious and pressing truth?

The Prime Minister: There have been a number of price reductions and price reviews over the past five or six years—

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: They are no good.

The Prime Minister: I hear my hon. Friend say that the prices are no good. I would not say that they are no good. However, they are not sufficient on their own. That is why we have had to introduce quotas. My hon. Friend comes from a part of the country which is aware of the difficulty which that can cause. However, such action had to be taken. There are other mechanisms guaranteeing only a

certain amount of the guaranteed threshold. Other measures that are now being established are limiting the times in the year when food can be sold into intervention. We are really trying to move to a position in which intervention becomes a safety net and not merely a means of storing surplus stocks. It is difficult to get rid of the surpluses that we now have, and that are an overhang on the world price, but great efforts are being made and further efforts were made in this price review. My hon. Friend will know that one cannot make changes that are too sudden, bearing in mind the fact that the farming industry cannot take sudden changes because of the cycle of production.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): Since the right hon. Lady told the House that an effective decision was taken to freeze expenditure on research and development, will she inform the House what impact that will have on the United Kingdom? The right hon. Lady must be aware that in this country great criticisms are made about the spend on research and development. Do she and her Government propose to do anything to deal with any difficulty that may arise in relation to the spend on research and development?

The Prime Minister: Yes. As I said, we made provision for that while we were at the European Council. What we are talking about is not our spending on research and development. As the hon. Gentleman knows, taxpayers' spending on research and development in this country on civil and defence matters is a bigger proportion of our national income than that of most other countries on the continent. We are talking about Community research and development, and we could not agree an increase in that spending because the Community is already overspent for this year. Therefore, any additional spending must be considered when the financial discipline that I referred to is in place. Because there could have been problems on continuing research programmes and obtaining finance we said that the amount of money in this year's budget can continue to be spent, as can the same amount in next year's budget. That should obviate any difficulties that might otherwise have occurred.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it remains her policy, in pursuing British objectives—as she said at the annual dinner of the National Farmers Union—to resist any measures that are directly discriminatory against British agriculture?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I think that my hon. Friend is after a particular mechanism that arises time and time again and limits help to farms to the first few head of sheep or cattle, which deliberately helps small farms, but is detrimental to our larger farms because our family farms are bigger. Such proposals arise from time to time, and I believe that they did once again in this Agriculture Council. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was stern in refusing to accept them.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is the Prime Minister aware that I give her eight out of 10 for her performance? The first point that she lost was when she returned on a previous occasion from Fontainebleau and said that she had solved the problem when she had not, as we told her. The second point is one that she could retrieve. We fear that in the future, when it is fudged and

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

mudged in Copenhagen or Bonn, she will once again give more money. That is what we think will happen, and her bluster will not stick. Will she tell us why we should have a common agricultural policy? What is the benefit of it? Are we to assume that this great movement of nations is dependent on a common price for onions? Why do we not repatriate our agricultural policy? Why does not each country have its own agricultural policy? We cannot reform it, so why do we not end the common agricultural policy?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for the eight out of 10, but I am still wondering a little. We have been negotiating financial arrangements for this country since 1981 and up to the end of 1987 we have secured a return from the Community budget for this country of £6.6 billion, which is a considerable figure. Nevertheless, we are still net contributors. With regard to the other matters that the hon. Gentleman raised, we shall consider increasing own resources when we have that binding, enforceable discipline in place, which is not there at the moment. The hon. Gentleman may recall that even in this brief spell of questioning I have had more applications for Community spending on research and development and on structural funds. An assurance has been sought that we will ensure that Britain's farms are properly treated on a fair basis with those in the rest of the Community. This requires money. We have a thriving rural economy, partly because of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in reminding the member states' Governments and the Commission of the principle that finance must determine expenditure and not expenditure determine finance she speaks not only for the British people but for millions of taxpayers across Europe?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I put that point many times on Monday and Tuesday in the debates. We must determine our expenditure according to reasonable income and not tot up our demands and say that we must make the necessary transfers to meet those demands. That is not the way that we must go and I agree with my hon. Friend.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will endeavour to call on the later statement those hon. Members who have not been called during this statement.

"Today" Newspaper

4.6 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the future of the *Today* newspaper.

Under the Fair Trading Act 1973 the consent of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is required for all newspaper mergers which concentrate into the hands of one newspaper proprietor newspapers having a paid-for circulation of 500,000 per issue. My right hon. and noble Friend's consent cannot normally be given without a report from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. He can, however, give consent without such a report where he is satisfied that the newspaper concerned in the transfer is not economic as a going concern, is to continue as a separate newspaper and that the case is one of urgency.

My right hon. and noble Friend has received such an application for the transfer of the *Today* newspaper from Lonrho plc to News International plc. He is satisfied that this application meets the criteria that I have outlined and, taking account of all the relevant circumstances, he has decided that it is right for him to give his consent to it. He has accordingly consented to the transfer.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Is the Chancellor of the Duchy aware that what he has announced is a breathtaking abdication of responsibility by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry? Under the Act, such a takeover is illegal and void unless conditional or unconditional approval is given by the Secretary of State. In acceding to the pistol that was put at their head by the arrogant Mr. Murdoch, who required the Government's permission by 4 pm, the Government have betrayed their responsibilities to Parliament and the people by indulging Mr. Murdoch's whim.

Is the Chancellor of the Duchy aware that Mr. Murdoch already owns 32.2 per cent. of all of the circulation of daily newspapers and 35.2 per cent. of all the circulation of Sunday newspapers in this country? To allow him to gobble up *Today* without a single condition put in his way is breathtaking in its audacity. The Opposition would urge a referral, whoever was acquiring it in such a monopolistic manner. Should not the Chancellor of the Duchy invite the Secretary of State to review his decision so that some conditions can be put on the merger, if it is to be allowed? Why can we not have a referral so that this monopolistic situation can be thoroughly reviewed and examined in the public interest?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. and noble Friend has referred himself clearly to his duties under the Fair Trading Act, has made an extremely responsible decision in the present circumstances and has taken account of the matters that he is supposed to when reaching his decision. This takeover has an effect on the circulation figures, but the title in question is a new one that has been recently established. It has 2.5 per cent. of the market and the company that is acquiring the title does not have a title in this part of the market, where titles such as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* are mainly in competition.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman and those who support him are themselves irresponsible if they assert that, whoever had been involved in the application, a referral would have been made. This newspaper is losing a substantial amount of money and is plainly at risk of

closure. Its sister title, *Today on Sunday*, has already closed. A referral would have caused considerable delay and my right hon. and noble Friend had a resolution from the board of the company saying that it was its intention to close if the matter were referred. He made his decision, not because of that resolution, but because of the state of the title, which is losing large sums and because 500 jobs would be at risk if a referral were made and the newspaper closed.

I suggest that right hon. and hon. Members of the Opposition would have made an equally strong protest if a referral had been made and the newspaper had closed. Then they would have accused my right hon. and noble Friend of acting irresponsibly by gambling with the future of journalists, whose jobs have been secured by my right hon. and noble Friend's decision.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on acting so quickly to save jobs? In view of the political slant of this newspaper and the fact that it supports the Liberal alliance, does he agree that to refer it to a commission dealing with mergers would not be appropriate?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. It will be interesting to see what alliance Members have to say about mergers. The issue is not the political control of the newspaper but the position of the title, its future, jobs on *Today* and the public interest, which my right hon. and learned Friend has properly addressed.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that we regard his statement as a disgraceful negation? Does he agree that to accept the 4 o'clock deadline was an outrage? His excuses are lame in the extreme. The way in which he replied to the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) perhaps explains why Government Members are so keen on the proposition and why the anger expressed from the Opposition Front Bench was so synthetic.

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that the national press in Britain is concentrated in the hands of two hard-line proprietors who represent an imposed political line which illustrates the most distasteful aspects of the two main political parties? Is that a tolerable and proper way to ensure choice or morality? Is he aware that the regional press which has to compete with the big battalions will not be cheering his announcement today?

Mr. Clarke: We were not working against a 4 o'clock deadline. The last resolution that we received from News International plc was that, in the absence of consent by midnight tonight, the title would be closed forthwith. My right hon. and noble Friend's decision was not determined by that. He had to address himself to his duty under the Fair Trading Act 1973 that this was an urgent case. A referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission would have caused a delay of weeks, during which time the company would have continued to lose substantial sums. The company asserted that it proposed to close the title. It would have been a gamble to make the referral in the hope that the title could survive long enough for its future to be sorted out given the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's recommendations.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) makes political points about the control of the newspaper but they are not the predominant or important factors. It is no

good asserting that the decision is disgraceful if hon. Members will not face the reality that my right hon. and noble Friend has saved a newspaper title and preserved a substantial number of jobs.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): In a calmer moment, will my right hon. and learned Friend give serious consideration to whether the time has come for us to abolish this embarrassing and increasingly meaningless non-referral of newspapers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that only a few months ago, in conditions of great gravity, financial hardship and urgency, *The Sunday Times* was not referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? Before that, *The Times* acquisition was not referred to the commission; and before that *The Sun* was not referred. Can we at least give Mr. Murdoch a free pass and have done with it?

Mr. Clarke: I think that my hon. Friend's criticism is of the legislation and the way it began. The key point, to which my hon. Friend has no more an answer than the Opposition, is that it is beyond dispute that the newspaper is in serious financial difficulty. Its immediate future was imminently at risk. In those circumstances it was the duty of my right hon. and noble Friend to address himself to the facts, to the Fair Trading Act and its provisions and to exercise his duty in the public interest — which I believe he has done.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Did the Secretary of State give any consideration whatsoever to lifting the so-called deadline imposed by Mr. Murdoch, so that the House of Commons and others could express a view? Was that ever considered? Does the Minister appreciate that, if that had been done, others would have had an opportunity to express their views? The decision brings the whole of the so-called anti-monopoly legislation into disrepute and people will have no faith in it. The Ministers said that Mr. Murdoch has no other newspaper in the same field. Does he mean that *Today* has not yet reached the degrading standard of journalism which Mr. Murdoch's other publications represent?

Mr. Clarke: The resolution of the board was before my right hon. and noble Friend and that is the only statement of the quality of a company that we have. He had to consider not just that resolution but whether the case was urgent. He had to weigh up the alternatives—a referral or a non-referral.

A referral would have taken weeks if not months and caused uncertainty while a solution was produced. The case was urgent, so it was necessary for my right hon. and noble Friend to work within his own timetable and come to a decision in time for it to be effective. As a result of his decision, *Today* will continue to be on sale and it will continue to be a title in the newspaper market. The editorial content of a newspaper is not a matter for my right hon. and noble Friend.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is significant that no other bidder publicly emerged to save the jobs? Does he further agree that it shows that rich Liberals, having discovered that such views lose them votes, are not prepared to have those views lose them money?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. There have been other bids and rumours of other bids which appear

[Mr. Clarke]

to have fallen through. That was not the resolution before my right hon. and noble Friend. A particular bid was referred to him, and he had to exercise his powers under the Act. In the circumstances, he was right to take the decision that he did.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the Murdoch press is already responsible for introducing a degree of mendacity and privacy invasion into the British media which is unknown in modern times? Does he agree that it is profoundly undemocratic to extend the influence of this American citizen over the British media and that it will be widely seen as a pay-off by the Conservative party to the Murdoch press?

Mr. Clarke: As I said a few moments ago, I have no doubt that, had my right hon. and noble Friend taken a decision which involved closure, he would have been accused, among other things, of a pay-off amongst the journalists on the *Today* newspaper who opposed the Government during the election campaign. He would be accused of taking his revenge by robbing them of their jobs. None of that came into his consideration.

Perhaps the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) was trying to pay a compliment to News (UK) Ltd. and Lornrho, and to the impartiality of newspapers under that ownership. The editor and previous editor seemed to be respected journalists. A new editor has been appointed to the title and I have no reason to believe that he is not an independent journalist. The public interest has been best protected by what we have done.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): My right hon. and learned Friend and my Conservative colleagues are entitled to take a somewhat cynical view of the customary protestations of Opposition Members that they care about employment. Is it not a simple fact that the paper was losing £38 million a year and that 500 jobs were at risk, and that that was the Government's prime consideration?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is obvious that what influences Opposition Members most is whether they agree with what a newspaper says. My hon. Friend and I—and my right hon. and noble Friend who made this decision—are concerned about the jobs and about the future of a separate title in Fleet street, which might otherwise have folded and followed *Today on Sunday* into oblivion.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Minister aware that nobody will be at all surprised that, following the scurrilous campaigns waged by Mr. Murdoch in support of his colleagues, the Government have conceded immediately to his demands in this case? Is he further aware that nobody will take at all seriously his remarks about protecting jobs, as *Today* began with the tragedy at Warrington and is now to be bought by the man who slaughtered 5,000 jobs at Wapping? Therefore, any suggestion that the Government's decision is about protecting jobs will not be taken seriously. Is the Minister aware that Mr. Murdoch has cancelled without any consultation the house agreement between the journalists at *Today* and their previous proprietor and has imposed on them the house agreement that he imposed on the News

International journalists? Journalists are being bought and sold like chattels. Is that the right hon. and learned Gentleman's definition of the freedom of the press?

Mr. Clarke: Clearly, the right hon. Gentleman's opinions are mainly governed by his implacable prejudice against the proprietor of News International, who has acquired the *Today* title. Those prejudices are not relevant to this decision, and nor do the management of newspapers and the arrangements between newspapers and their journalists directly concern my right hon. and noble Friend. Furthermore, I have no evidence that the *Today* journalists will necessarily object to the arrangements to be made. Those matters will arise now that the merger is to go ahead and once the title is secured and the newspaper sets off under the new ownership.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with me that the 32.3 per cent. ownership referred to by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) should be considered alongside the fact that our ex-Labour colleague, Mr. Maxwell, at presents controls 28 per cent? There was a rumour that he was to buy *Today* himself, which would have brought him well over the 33 per cent. mark. In fiscal terms, Mr. Murdoch is clearly a very brave man to give £40 million to a paper that is losing £38 million every year and he should be congratulated rather than derided.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. According to my figures, News International has 33 per cent. of the popular dailies, Mr. Maxwell's Mirror Group has 26 per cent., United Newspapers has 25 per cent., and the Associated Newspapers Group 14 per cent., whereas *Today* has only 2.5 per cent. Those figures give some indication of the impact on the market, or the concentration of power.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the people of Liverpool will not take seriously the Government's talk about saving jobs? In two days' time, 750 News International workers will be made redundant, in spite of the fact that—unfortunately—they worked during the Wapping dispute. Therefore, people will not take any notice of the Government's claim that they are concerned about 500 jobs. Members of Parliament from the area made representations to the Government asking them to do something and only today I received a reply from them saying that they will not intervene in commercial decisions. The Government are in Murdoch's pocket and they do exactly what Murdoch wants.

Mr. Clarke: The difficult Liverpool case that the hon. Gentleman describes is beside the point, unless he seeks to deny that the closure of *Today* might have cost jobs. It seems obvious to me that, had my right hon. and noble Friend gambled with the future of the title, and had the board gone ahead with its stated intention of closing it, many jobs would have been lost. That is the issue to which we must address ourselves today.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind the fact that the Opposition's synthetic anger comes from a party which wholeheartedly supported the rioters at Wapping? Will he

remember that the Labour party's political prejudice has now been shown to extend to their being totally careless of the loss of 500 jobs?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. We are witnessing merely an extension of the policy of the Opposition who, as my hon. Friend said, have supported industrial action against the premises of News International that was illegal and sometimes violent. Now, because of their hostility to the proprietor of News International, they are prepared to be quite reckless about the jobs of the *Today* workers.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. For the reasons that I have already stated, I shall allow questions for a further five minutes.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Does not this abdication of responsibility underline the need for the House to examine the whole question of the ownership of the British press, which is coming increasingly under alien influences—in this case the malign influence of an Australian carpetbagger who, for his own commercial aggrandisement, has chosen to become an American citizen and who has managed to achieve a decline in the already appallingly low levels of the British popular press, as well as one of the quality papers?

Mr. Clarke: The application that my right hon. and noble Friend considered, and gave a proper legal judgment in, came from News (UK) Ltd. and Tiny Rowlands' Lonrho organisation. I repeat that most of the matters being raised by the Opposition are quite irrelevant, and none of them more so than the question of the nationality of one of the leading figures in one of the companies involved.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Does not the Minister understand that the issue at stake here is not just a party political issue; it goes much wider and affects the quality of our democracy. The high concentration of ownership of the British media and the degrading pornography and lies spread throughout the press are a danger to the quality of our society. If the Minister will not make a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, will he agree that his Government should review the question of the concentration of ownership of the press for the sake of democracy, which is a bigger issue than his party or ours?

Mr. Clarke: I am sure that all hon. Members are concerned about the future of the newspaper industry and about the state of our democracy and so on. I am sure that we are all anxious to ensure that we obtain a truthful, accurate and reasonably independent press in this country. However, those were not the issues that had to be considered by my right hon. and noble Friend—except that he had to take a view of the public interest and to decide what was in the interests of achieving the best kind of press. In particular, he had to address himself to the immediate problem of a title that was losing a large amount of money and was under the threat of imminent closure. The company that owned it came to him with a proposal for a merger with another company intending to continue it as an independent title. I believe that, on a moment's reflection, people will understand that he came to the only sensible and responsible decision.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Does not the Minister agree that a diversity of views and choice are

essential for democracy and that, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands East (Mr. Smith) explained, concentrations of ownership must limit that diversity? Is he unaware that we are the only European country that does not have specific legislation to control concentrations of ownership in our press? Is he further unaware that the problem attacks our culture and our democracy as a whole and not simply the newspaper industry? Large areas of our media and our cultural industries—the film industry, publishing, radio, satellite and cable—are being concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer companies, and that cannot be in the interests of our country.

Mr. Clarke: We all want to see diversity in our newspapers and a reasonable range of news, but what we are dealing with here is a critical and urgent situation that has arisen in the case of a new title only about 18 months old. It had won an extremely small stake in the market and was losing money so heavily that the board resolved that it was imminently about to close. It is certainly probable that, had my right hon. and noble Friend done as the Opposition have urged, we would simply have one less newspaper and 500 fewer jobs. I do not believe that that would serve the interests of democracy, the newspaper industry or the public.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is new to his job, aware that previous royal commissions have warned against the danger of monopoly and recommended more diversity? If Rupert Murdoch, who is an undesirable alien if ever there was one, gets his hands on the *Today* newspaper, it will be a massive move towards monopoly. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recall that it was said that new technology would give extra diversity and that there would be new newspapers? If the first newspaper founded with new technology falls into the maw of Rupert Murdoch, that will extend the monopoly of our press. Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman remember the glib promises that Rupert Murdoch gave concerning *The Sunday Times*, but which he broke and which have been referred to by the Opposition? If monopolies and mergers legislation and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will not deal with monopolies, what is the point of having the commission and that legislation?

Mr. Clarke: Had a Labour Secretary of State been faced with this application, he would not have been entitled to base his decision on dislike for the political views of the proprietor, dislike of the way in which an industrial dispute had been conducted by that firm or any other of those matters that have so taxed the Opposition. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), to avoid the obvious problem of asserting that he disliked Rupert Murdoch and News International, said that he would have referred any such application for that newspaper. However, all that that would produce is total closure. In fact, the right hon. and learned Gentleman would have to reject the type of arguments that have been urged by his Back Benchers.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will my right hon. and learned Friend continue to reject completely the cant, humbug and insults from the Opposition Benches? Does he agree that there might be some point in making a

[Mr. David Harris]

reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in this case if some other person wanted to buy *Today*? However, apparently no one else wants to buy it and therefore there is no possible point in making a reference to that commission. Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, in my case as a journalist, if I happened to work for the *Today* newspaper I would be glad that somebody such as Mr. Murdoch wished to buy it rather than nobody—for then I would be out of a job?

Mr. Clarke: There certainly was no other application before my right hon. and noble Friend. There have been repeated stories in the newspapers about other people being interested in the newspaper, but my right hon. and noble Friend has had to consider what was before him—an application from News International accompanied by a board resolution from News (UK) Ltd. stating that the paper would close at midnight tonight if the bid was referred. We looked at the finances of the newspaper and certainly there was the strong probability that the newspaper would not survive a reference while, at the same time, the Opposition indulged their political prejudices and other people tried to get bids together. My right hon. and noble Friend was faced with no other sensible choice.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Minister aware that few people in the country will truly believe that the Government would have approved this deal had not Mr. Murdoch given total, loyal support to the Tory party over many years? Is the Minister aware that the relationship now between this Tory Government and Mr. Murdoch clearly smells of outright political corruption?

Mr. Clarke: I think that that is an outrageous allegation from the hon. Gentleman. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is true."] If any member of the public believes that this decision was taken solely because the Government are sympathetic to the views of Mr. Murdoch, he would be believing a total untruth. This morning and this afternoon, the Secretary of

State has addressed himself to his legal duties under the Fair Trading Act 1973, the facts as they were presented to him and his judgment of them. His judgment was that it was urgently necessary to give consent to this application to avoid a closure and to make sure that a newspaper continued in existence.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does not the success of News International prove the folly of trying to protect restrictive practices, as advocated by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)?

Mr. Clarke: If the right hon. Member for Chesterfield was allowed to determine industrial relations in the newspaper industry and had some of the industrial action that he has supported succeeded, we would have fewer newspapers in this country and a much more uncertain outlook for the press, democracy and all the other considerations that the Opposition have discussed. We are merely facing unreasonable political prejudice on the Opposition's part and that prejudice is trying to get behind a sensible, legal decision.

Mr. John Smith: Will the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster define the section of the market to which he referred? Is it not the case that *Today* occupies the same section of the market that *The Sun* occupied before its purchase by Mr. Murdoch? If the Minister is so sincere about protecting jobs, why did he not make it a condition of consent that those jobs were protected?

Mr. Clarke: At the moment, *Today* is in the middle of the market. Obviously one cannot determine this, as, for a start, it is a matter of judgment. In my judgment, *Today* is in the same part of the market as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*. The security of those jobs will depend on the improved success of the title. The title obviously must win more circulation and readership and get itself into a more secure financial position. At the moment, it is uneconomic and is facing the threat of closure. My right hon. and noble Friend has rescued the paper from that threat.

Agriculture Council

4.35 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, I shall make a statement about the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers of the European Community, which took place during last night.

After four months of negotiations, the Council finally took decisions on support prices and other measures for 1987-88. The compromise agreement marks a further significant step towards achieving a reformed common agricultural policy that is more market orientated, with reduced price support and with intervention systems operating to provide a safety net and not an alternative market outlet. The changes in the cereals and oilseeds regimes complement the substantial reforms which were achieved last December in the milk and beef sectors. The agreement will produce savings for the Community budget in 1987 and 1988; and it is a relatively favourable settlement for the United Kingdom, improving the position of our farmers and traders relative to their main competitors in the Community.

The decisions include substantial changes in the support arrangements for a number of commodities. There will be cuts in the prices at which cereals, oilseeds, rice and olive oil are bought into intervention. The periods of the year during which intervention is available for these products will be shortened. Guarantee threshold arrangements are introduced for olive oil, soya beans and tomatoes, and the existing threshold arrangements for oilseeds will operate more effectively. The Council also cut support for wine, protein crops and those fruit crops which place the biggest burden on the budget.

Following the discussion in the European Council earlier in the day, there was no question of the oils and fats tax being adopted. The Commission has not withdrawn its proposal and intends to hold discussions with overseas suppliers. I re-emphasised our position of strong resistance to that tax and made it clear that our attitude is unchanged.

The package includes a number of decisions in the agrimonetary area. Those include a devaluation of the green pound so as to reduce United Kingdom monetary compensatory amounts by 7 points for beef and 5½ points for other commodities, with the exception of sheep. Green rate changes for sheep will be considered as part of the review of the sheep regime later this year. Besides the devaluations, our farmers and traders will benefit from changes in the method of calculating monetary compensatory amounts for beef, cereals and dairy products, for which we pressed during the negotiations.

Following discussion by Heads of Government, the Council adopted new arrangements for phasing out existing positive MCAs and continued the present system that prevents new positive MCAs from arising, but with some adaptations which should be of some assistance in reducing the inflationary effects and which provide for the more automatic removal of new negative MCAs. This new system will be reviewed after one year.

I estimate that, taking the prices and the green rate changes together, this package will itself leave United Kingdom farm incomes unchanged. The effect on consumers will be very small.

In the negotiations I secured a number of welcome changes to the Commission's original proposals. I fought off any decision on the proposal to limit the number of ewes per farm which can receive annual premium. The Commission promised to make a proposal for a system of milk quota leasing: this is now being discussed in Brussels. I negotiated an additional year, up to April 1989, for the acceptance of salted butter into intervention. The Commission has agreed to present an overall study of alternative land use for consideration by the Council in the autumn, and the Council has accepted the need to take rapid measures to ensure an adequate margin for the refining of raw cane sugar in the United Kingdom.

This agreement is a further important step in the direction of reform. But the problems of surplus production remain, and, with them, the heavy budgetary burdens that result. There is no doubt that further decisions will be needed later in the year to correct the unacceptable budgetary situation.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): Because of the complexity of statements such as the one that we have just heard, more questions appear to be begotten by them than usual. I hope that we shall be given a guarantee of an early debate so that we may reduce the number of questions.

I wish to make two references to the statement which I think will be uncontentious. First, let me say to the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who was formerly Minister of Agriculture but has now been replaced, that we thank him for the courtesy and patience with which he has always explained and kept us informed of developments. Whatever our judgment of his tenure of office, we wish him well on the Back Benches.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): He was a dumpling.

Mr. John: Yes, but he was the best dumpling we had.

Secondly, I welcome the new Minister of Agriculture, who makes his first appearance in his position today. He brings many attributes on his return to the Ministry, but he certainly does not bring as many inches with him. While I cannot promise that I shall see eye to eye with him on many issues in the metaphorical sense, at least I shall have more chance of doing so in the physical sense than I had with his predecessor.

Any efforts that the right hon. Gentleman makes to bring sanity to the common agricultural policy will have the backing of the whole House. I welcome the news that there will be no oil and fats tax, and that the Commission is not pursuing the new premium flock size limitations. The effect of the former would be penal for both United Kingdom consumers and the Third world, and the effect on the latter would be discriminatory. The Commission intends to return to both measures later, but it must be told in no uncertain terms that our opposition will not waver in the interim.

I should like to ask some detailed questions. The first concerns milk quota leasing. The effect of that will depend on how quickly it is brought into force. We are already into the financial year. How quickly will it come about, and will it be of any help in the current financial year?

Secondly, will the Minister confirm that, even with the lowering of the MCAs—I congratulate him on the masterly clarity of the statement on MCAs and negative MCAs—our beef producers will still be at an 8 per cent. disadvantage as opposed to their Irish counterparts, consequent on the October package for the Irish Republic

[Mr. John]

alone? Can the Minister tell us whether—and, if so, when—the common agricultural policy will run out of money this year? Making payment in arrears rather than in advance, and other savings, would not appear to be anything like enough. Many people fear that what the Minister says about corrections to the policy later in the year simply means the raising of further revenue. That will be resisted by both sides of the House until the EEC undertakes reform that will eliminate surplus production of food within the Community.

Thirdly, what is the expected effect of the price proposals on the volume of reduction? The Minister talked about the cut in cereals, oilseed rape and other products, and that must be placed alongside December's livestock package. But what is the estimated effect of the changes in reducing the food mountains in the various regimes? Will it bring reductions in those, or will it merely lead to more production as farmers try to grow more to compensate for lost income?

Will the Minister also clarify his statement that the agreement will produce savings in 1987-88? Will it produce savings against the budget, or against the overspend which is now £3 billion to £3.5 billion above what was budgeted for the CAP? Is the report in the *Financial Times* accurate? It says that all the savings will be offset by the so-called reform of the agrimonetary system agreed largely by the Germans and the French at the conference.

This package amounts to yet another evasion of responsibility—another hasty and short-term package, and another failure of will on the part of the Ministers. Once again, the need to reform the CAP has been accepted and then forgotten. But this is not an endless process. It has gone on for far too long, and the Ministers must tame the CAP before it destroys them.

Mr. MacGregor: I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman has made about the complexity of the issues, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will have heard his remarks about the need for a debate—although the number of questions that the hon. Gentleman has asked me almost provokes a debate in itself.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). It gives me the opportunity to say that my right hon. Friend played a very notable part in advancing the reforms of the CAP. He was in the forefront, because he understood that they were necessary in the long term for our farmers' interests. He fought hard and successfully for British interests in achieving those reforms, and I believe that he will be seen to have played a significant part in the development of agriculture. I am also grateful for the hon. Gentleman's remarks to me.

Two of the main objections to the oils and fats tax were those raised by the hon. Gentleman—first, that it would be heavy on consumers, and heaviest on the poorest consumers in the United Kingdom, and, secondly, the Third world impact. There has been considerable concentration on American resistance to the tax but the hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the Third world. As for the limit on headage payments for ewes, I stressed strongly in the Council, when it was pushed from that discussion into discussing the sheepmeat regime, that I regarded it as very discriminatory towards the United

Kingdom. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said the same in her statement, and I will maintain that position.

We had considerable discussion about milk quota leasing both before I arrived at the Council and during my time there. I will be following up that discussion urgently, and I hope that arrangements will be made as soon as possible.

As for beef producers vis-à-vis the Irish, there is still a gap, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that we have achieved a considerable improvement in the position as a result of the changes that have been made. It is important to note that the Irish Minister voted against the final MCA package—the green rate package. On the question of the cost of the CAP and the change from advance payment to reimbursement, that is now going to the ECOFIN Council so that Finance Ministers can decide exactly how it should be implemented. It is not possible at this stage to say how much budgetary savings will be achieved from it during the year, but clearly it could be significant.

I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman about dealing with the budgetary gap in the CAP through further revenue proposals. That is why we originally fought the cereals co-responsibility levy, and it has been a major argument in our opposition to the oils and fats tax. I am glad to know that my resistance to those measures will be supported by the Opposition.

As for the expectation of production, the purpose and thrust of our progress on stabilisers in the Community system is to reduce production where we have surpluses. However, we cannot always be sure exactly how much will be achieved. We all know the effect of technological advance and progress in increasing production from the same amount of land. It will also depend on our harvest. But the thrust of the proposals is to reduce surpluses, and hence to reduce production where there are surpluses.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman spoke of evasion of responsibility and a hasty decision. As it has taken us four months—almost into the marketing year for several commodities—to reach agreement, it was hardly a hasty set of decisions. The fact that it took so long to reach those decisions surely demonstrates the difficulty of reaching agreements among 12 people on what are now clearly enormous challenges for all Agriculture Ministers. Very painful decisions had to be taken which would have very painful effects on many farmers. Therefore, it is understandable that it took so long. That we are facing up to the issues shows that there is no evasion of responsibility. There has been a significant change of attitude, compared with a few years ago, among the Council of Ministers, and it is realised that these issues have to be tackled. However, we are only one of 12 member states. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we need to make further significant progress.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask for brief questions on this statement. We have a very heavy programme in front of us today, and there will be questions on agriculture tomorrow.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his appointment. Will he accept that many of us on this side of the House appreciate the long hours of work that he has put into the EEC during the last few

weeks in order to reach a long overdue conclusion? Will he also bear in mind that in the livestock and less-favoured areas there is still grave concern about confidence and future stability? Can my right hon. Friend reassure us about beef production, and can he say whether a further devaluation of the green pound is possible? Finally, is he convinced that there is no way in which the Irish could get round the agreement and obtain preferential treatment in our markets?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with him that conclusions were long overdue. I was anxious to reach a settlement because I recognised the uncertainty that was being created for farmers and traders because of movement into the marketing year, with no decisions having been taken. I understand only too well my hon. Friend's point about future confidence and the stability of the regimes. However, I strongly believe that it is in the long-term interests of farmers that we should get on top of the surpluses and the enormous budgetary overruns in order to create confidence. Without doing so, we run the risk of a descent into chaos. Therefore, it will be to the long-term advantage of our farmers that reform should be achieved.

I cannot say whether or not there will be a further devaluation of the green pound. The results that we achieved—a better position on the green pound than the Commission originally proposed—were fair to our producers in the current circumstances, bearing in mind also the need to avoid heavy budgetary increases.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): May I first congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on taking over this very high office of looking after British agriculture and consumers? I wish him well in his deliberations, and may he be blessed with good health. I pay tribute also to the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who has retired from that office, for services rendered to British agriculture.

By devaluing the green pound by 5 per cent., are British farmers now competing on equal terms with their European counterparts? Will the right hon. Gentleman also assure sheep producers that he will not give in on the number of sheep that qualify for the ewe premium? Furthermore, how long does the right hon. Gentleman think it will take to do away with our surpluses? Does he think that they will diminish in four or five years?

Finally, there seems to be a little disagreement between the right hon. Gentleman and the Prime Minister. I understand that he is quite pleased with this week's deliberations in Brussels. However, having listened to the Prime Minister, I do not believe that she is satisfied with the present state of the common agricultural policy. What, therefore, does the future hold for British agriculture?

Mr. MacGregor: Again, that is almost a speech in a debate. However, to be as brief as possible, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome. I am very conscious of my heavy responsibilities. I am even more grateful for the tribute that he paid to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale. It was extremely well deserved.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about devaluation and whether it has helped British producers, it is important to look at the estimated changes in average support prices. If one looks at the early calculations, which are fairly

accurate, one sees that, overall, the change in average support prices in the United Kingdom is about plus 2.4 per cent., compared with the Community average for the Ten of about plus 0.5 per cent. Therefore, we have achieved a very helpful and relatively improved position for British farmers. The hon. Gentleman knows that there has been a 7 per cent. devaluation for British beef, whereas it is 5.5 per cent. for other commodities. We shall have very difficult discussions on sheepmeat when we see the Commission's proposals for the review of the sheepmeat regime. I gave a clear indication in the Council that I was strongly opposed to the proposal for a ceiling on headage payments.

As to when the surpluses might disappear, I have been in the job for only a short time, but even after having been in it for quite a long time, I suspect that it would not be possible to answer that question.

Finally, I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no disagreement between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and me. I should have liked there to be more progress this week on agriculture.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Since my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister now concedes that reform of the common agricultural policy and the system of budgetary control agreed at Fontainebleau has failed, why cannot the Government, first, be very polite to our 11 partners in the EEC and, secondly, make it absolutely plain that in no circumstances whatsoever will the Government recommend to this House that there should be an increase in resources payable to the EEC?

Mr. MacGregor: That question should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. In fact, she responded to it in the earlier exchanges.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Why is the Minister content to rely entirely on price cuts rather than on quotas to curb production?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that I have made it clear that I am not doing so. For example, if he looks at what has been achieved in the dairy sector, the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that quotas have been introduced and that they are producing considerable stability. However, there are very serious administrative and policing difficulties over transferring that stability to other sectors, such as cereals. We have to face the fact that land must come out of cereals production. That is why we are looking at alternatives. They include set-aside and alternative land use. I hope to explore further these alternatives at Community level as well as at national level.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): On alternative land use, will my right hon. Friend tell the House whether the present agreement will help or hinder the further production of wool in the United Kingdom, which many of us feel could be expanded? He will recall that once it was the great, staple trade of large parts of the kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that the agreement that has been reached this week has any impact on that issue. However, I know that many people in the farming community are looking at possibilities for wool. However, one should not exaggerate the impact that they will have on land use, having regard to the problems that we face over surpluses.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): May I press the Minister a little further on his understandably brief reference to the wine industry? During the discussions on the wine industry, were any proposals put forward to increase the amount of fermentation alcohol that is to be refined and unloaded on to the industrial alcohol market? If such proposals are put forward, I urge the Minister strongly to resist any increase in the amount of fermentation alcohol to be distilled because of the disastrous effect that it would have on the production of industrial alcohol in chemical industries, such as those in Grangemouth, which is in my constituency.

Mr. MacGregor: During the time that I was in the Council there was little discussion of the wine regime, and that particular matter was certainly not discussed. I cannot recall offhand what happened earlier in the Council discussions. However, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

On the hon. Gentleman's wider point, I have taken note of what he said. I am aware of the various discussions that are taking place about industrial use, and I shall wish to consider the matter further.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I thank the Minister for following in his predecessor's footsteps and resisting the limitation on ewe headage payments. I thank him, too, for getting a better devaluation of the green pound than at one time looked possible. However, may I ask him to follow in the footsteps of his right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary? Now that New Zealand is no longer pulling its weight in defending the free world, will he consider distributing the 75,000 tonnes among British farmers?

Mr. MacGregor: I know how strongly my right hon. Friend felt about the ceiling on ewe premiums, and I agree with him entirely. I am happy to follow in his footsteps, as in other ways. As for my hon. Friend's point about New Zealand, that issue does not face us at present.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Given that in two statements today we have been told about less intensive farming and changes in land use, will this not in practice translate into lower production per acre? Since no further money is to be made available, will the Minister confirm that eventually that will be translated into a loss of farms and into a loss of jobs in farming? Given that we have a land frontier with the Irish Republic, have the matters been discussed within the ambit of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference in an effort to make the Irish Republic accept the sensible stance that has been taken by Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. MacGregor: I have not been a party to the discussions in the Anglo-Irish Conference, so I do not know the answer to the question. On the wider question that the hon. Gentleman asked, obviously less intensive use of land will play some part in dealing with the problem of the surplus that we face. The fact is that, with the enormous improvements in yields and in farming technology, together with the ability, not only until now but increasingly in the future, to produce much more food from the same amount of land, it is clear that agricultural land will have to come out of food production. We have to face up to that as one way in which the problem of the surpluses will have to be tackled.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the tragic number of family farm

bankruptcies that have recently occurred in Wales. Therefore, I welcome the fact that farm incomes will not be worsened and that my right hon. Friend is to take urgent action on milk quotas and the leasing of them. What does my right hon. Friend now believe to be the green pound gap for the beef sector?

Mr. MacGregor: I should like to make it clear that when I was referring to a neutral impact on farm incomes I was talking in relation to the package. Of course, many other factors affect farm incomes during the year—it is too early in the year to say what the effect of those will be—including the effect of the harvest and the way in which dairy producers react to reduced quotas and so on. I have stated that I believe that the beef devaluation was the fairest and best deal that we could get for our beef producers in the current price fixing review.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the Minister agree that the value of the green pound and its periodic devaluation or revaluation have often meant that British farming has lost out over the years because of the gap between the fixing of one value and the fixing of another? Would it not be better to tie the value of the green pound to the European basket of currencies a propos sterling, and thus protect our farming industry?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that that would necessarily make any difference. It is important to recognise what has happened with the devaluation of the green pound over recent months. We must consider the combination of the strengthening of sterling and the result of the negotiations that we have just completed in the price fixing review. Since February, cereals MCAs have fallen by about 14.5 points, and beef MCAs have fallen by almost 16 points. That is the kind of devaluation that farmers and many others were calling for in February, and it has now been achieved.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): When does my right hon. Friend hope that the consideration of milk quota leasing will be complete? The matter is causing grave concern. In the context of the grain surplus, has any consideration been given to the possibility of encouraging spring cereals, as opposed to winter cereals, as a means of reducing overall production?

Mr. MacGregor: On the first question, I understand entirely my hon. Friend's concern on behalf of farmers. I stressed the urgency of getting some resolution of the matter during the Council discussions. We shall follow it up urgently. I hope that we shall be able to get decisions fairly soon. The second question was not discussed during the negotiations.

Mr. Robert MacLennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Will the Minister be kind enough either to publish in the *Official Report* or perhaps to set out in detail in a letter his detailed calculations about the impact of the package on farm incomes, sector by sector, to explain the interrelationships of the MCA changes with the various cuts in price support?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall consider how that could be done. Of course, the estimate I have given that the effect on incomes would be neutral is tentative at this stage. It is difficult to single out the impact purely of the price fixing decisions on incomes, given that so many other variables affect incomes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend direct his attention to the problems of the dairy industry, particularly those of the small dairy farmer, in light of the remarks made by our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister? She said that measures should not be introduced because they would have to be phased in, and they should not have a retrospective impact. Will he recall the problems of smaller dairy farmers, who were retrospectively faced with quotas? Will he give an assurance, if the matter was not discussed at the recent Council meeting, that he will consider not imposing any further quota cuts on farms that have quotas of under 300,000 litres? Further, if there are quota sales, will the Minister consider imposing levies on farmers when farms have quotas in excess of 300,000 litres? That would preserve and ensure the position of the smaller dairy farmer, which is important in many parts of the country.

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend knows, I well recall the introduction of dairy quotas. I know of his extreme interest in the matter. He referred to retrospective impact. I strongly believe that, if the Council had faced up to the need to deal with dairy surpluses earlier than it did, we would not have had such difficulty and pain in the first year. Nevertheless, now that the situation has stabilised quite a good deal, it is helpful to the longer term certainty of dairy producers. There are no propositions before us that would enable consideration of the type of issue that my hon. Friend raised, but I have heard what he said.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What can we usefully say about the change in the guaranteed credit restrictions on tomatoes and the guaranteed threshold agreements for growers in places such as central Scotland? Will the Secretary of State put on the agenda for the autumn session, on the matter of alternative land use, the future of the low country of Caithness and Sutherland? It is becoming an urgent matter throughout Britain.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) helpfully suggested that it was a complex price package. I am grateful for that. I knew that I would be caught out on some detail of the price package. I shall write to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) about the tomato matter. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has been dealing with the matter of the low country. I have not yet had time to look at it.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): What a welcome relief it is to hear my right hon. Friend say that he anticipates no fall in agricultural incomes as a result of the package. I ask him to address the consequential problem of the crisis facing the agricultural engineering industry. It has two consequences for agriculture: first, increased import penetration with manufactured goods and, secondly, the growing problem that farmers face of getting spare parts for machinery.

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that it is inevitable that, when we are facing up to worldwide surpluses, the agricultural engineering industry, with which I keep in close contact, is bound to face considerable market problems. There is no way of avoiding that problem; it is worldwide. Before I went to Brussels yesterday, I was at an exhibition at which there were a number of representatives of the agricultural engineering industry. I thought that they were innovative and doing well in carving out markets for themselves.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I am surprised that a man from Lanarkshire has been caught out on the tomato matter. Does the Minister agree that quotas in any shape or form would have a disproportionate and disastrous effect on fragile rural communities in Scotland? Will he resist at all costs the imposition of such quotas? Does the negation of the oils and fats tax extend to fish oil and fishmeal?

Mr. MacGregor: On the first point about sheep quotas, we do not actually know what proposals the Commission will make in its review of the sheep regime. We shall have to wait to see what they are. On the second question about the oils and fats tax, some dispensations have been given for fish oils. I repeat that, for a variety of reasons, we are opposed in principle to the oils and fats tax. I am glad to say that a number of other member states, sufficient to produce a qualified minority blocking vote, hold the same view. We do not now have to consider the proposition.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are only part way through an agricultural revolution based on new technologies and techniques that will go on increasing European production? What is the overall effect on cost of the package of rather modest price adjustments? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, eventually, we shall have to repatriate the cost of agricultural support so that member countries can decide how much taxpayers' money to commit to agricultural support?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. One of the big difficulties, and why this matter is such a challenge, is that we shall increasingly see the impact of all the things to which he has referred raising production. On actual costs—or the effect on the budget of this package—if one takes into account the extra revenue that has resulted from a sugar levy, the saving to the budget this year and next year is about 1 billion ecu, or £700 million. Of course, that is a saving to the budget, and to that extent there will be an impact on the overspend. The actual saving, not including the increased revenue from the sugar levy, is about 800 million ecu.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Minister translate the savings that he claims for 1988-89 in the agriculture budget into a percentage? It is currently 73 per cent. of total Common Market spending, but what does he expect it to be in 1988-89? He said that the oil and fats tax proposal has not been withdrawn by the Commission. However, will he assure the House that, if the veto still exists, it will be applied by the Government to stop any increase?

He said also that the problems of surplus production will continue. Is he not concerned that, as those surpluses grow, giving dramatic evidence of the failure of the CAP, the Government could make a better job of that by renationalising agriculture in the United Kingdom? Is he not disturbed by the fact that the pro-Market fanatics, such as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), never attempt to defend the Common Market now?

Mr. MacGregor: Currently, the proportion is not 73 per cent. but, from memory, I think that it is about 67 per cent. It is too early to make any estimates for future years because we finished only a few hours ago. I have already made it clear that the oils and fats tax is not now before

[Mr. MacGregor]

the Council. In fact, it was pushed right off the debate. The Commission is maintaining its proposal, but the qualified blocking minority stood firm during the discussions and the question is now academic.

On surpluses, I would not put all the emphasis on the failure of the CAP because this matter is a difficult challenge for the CAP. I should put much more emphasis on the great success of our farmers, and the trades that assist them, in producing enormously increased yields in recent years. It is that that produces the challenge for us. However, I do not believe that tackling this matter at a national level alone is sufficient. What strikes me, compared with when I was last in the Ministry, is that this issue cannot now be resolved, even within the CAP. It needs to be resolved at an international level because of the high levels of agricultural support in so many countries, including the United States, as a result of the surpluses. The importance of the GATT negotiations, on which we are now embarking, is to deal with agricultural surpluses worldwide. The problem will not be solved purely on a national level.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall endeavour to call the four hon. Gentlemen who are standing, but I ask them to be brief.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewbury and Atcham): My right hon. Friend's news on the green pound is welcome as is the fact that he is continuing to resist the discredited alliance two-tier cereals pricing policy. Can my right hon. Friend assure the House of the time scale that we might see for milk quota leasing? Will he tell the House a little more about the impact on our surpluses of New Zealand imports? Finally, can my right hon. Friend assure those of us who are not competing for Shadow Cabinet election, but who have farming constituents, that the proposals contained in his statement this afternoon will, on reflection, defend a central British national interest?

Mr. MacGregor: If I may, Mr. Speaker, I shall answer those questions—or some of them—briefly. My hon. Friend is entirely right about the two-tier cereals pricing policy. I can think of no policy that is more designed to hit British cereal farming interests, as compared with European, than the two-tier cereal pricing policy that the alliance put forward at the election. As I have already suggested, we are urgently pursuing the timescale for the milk quota system. On my hon. Friend's final point, I can assure him that I am determined to see that British farming

interests are not unfairly jeopardised. I shall stand up for legitimate British farming interests as we continue with the problems of dealing with the CAP reform.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does my right hon. Friend get depressed at continually having to meet European politicians who exhibit so many of the fixations of the Labour party, such as little concern for the interests of consumers and taxpayers, but obsessive concern for producer interests, repressive regimes, and spend, spend, spend policies, regardless of where the money is coming from? Does he appreciate that many Conservative Members agree with the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) that these countries in the Community that produce the surpluses should pay for them?

Mr. MacGregor: A change of direction appears to be taking place in the Council of Ministers. However, the problems are so difficult that it will take time to make the significant changes that I should like to see. I stress that there is clear concern for consumers and that the effect of this year's price package on them will be small. In fact, it will amount to less than one tenth of 1 per cent. on the retail price index.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): On alternative land use, is my right hon. Friend aware that we now have more than 200 commercial vineyards in this country? He mentioned wine in his statement, but can he say something about the way in which wine will affect alternative land use in the future?

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that it will expand in this country. About a quarter of a mile from my cottage in Norfolk is an excellent English wine grower who is doing extremely well. I am keen to encourage the wine-growing sector in this country. However, it is still so small that it does not make any impact on or play any part in the wine regime.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Has any consideration been given to the reduction of Third-world cereal substitutes? My right hon. Friend must accept that it is a little galling for our cereal producers to be encouraged to cut their production while there are massive imports from the Third world in substitutes?

Mr. MacGregor: That was not much discussed during my time at the Council. However, my hon. Friend should take some other points into account, such as the interests of the livestock producers who have benefited quite a lot recently from the change in cereal prices. Of course, we have responsibilities to Third-world countries. I had that very much in mind and it was one of the reasons that we opposed the oils and fats tax.

"Today" Newspaper

5.17 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed sale of the *Today* newspaper to News International plc and the necessity for reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission".

In view of the heated exchanges that took place in the House earlier today, I need hardly dwell on the fact that this is a specific and important matter. It hardly needs to be argued that the matter is urgent because its urgency was prayed in aid by the Government in justification of their decision. Therefore, I seek to make this application under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. and learned Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed sale of the *Today* newspaper to News International plc and the necessity for reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission".

I have listened with care to the questions this afternoon and to what the right hon. and learned Gentleman has just said. He knows that my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is whether to give it priority over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that the matter that he has raised meets those criteria and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Mr. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is an important matter, and we understand the restrictions under which you must operate. However, as the Leader of the House is in his place, might I request that the Government find time, perhaps early next week, for a debate on this subject?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I recognise the importance of this subject and the interest that has been shown in it. The Government will make arrangements for an early debate on the matter, but perhaps the timing is best discussed through the usual channels.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the first statement today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was of much greater significance and importance than the subsequent statements, would it be possible to ask the Leader of the House, who is here at the moment, for an early debate on that subject also?

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the Leader of the House will have heard that, but the hon. Gentleman may have another opportunity to ask him tomorrow.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 17 JULY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Churchill
Mr. Paice
Sir Brandon Rhys Williams

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[FIFTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [25 June]

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—[*Mr. Churchill.*]

Question again proposed.

Cities (Education and Services)

Mr. Speaker: As I have already announced to the House, no fewer than 48 right hon. and hon. Members seek to take part in today's debate on the Queen's Speech. I again make a special plea for brief contributions, bearing in mind the fact that a large number of new Members wish to make their maiden speech.

I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At the beginning of our debate on the Queen's Speech, I asked whether you could select the amendment tabled by myself and my hon. Friends, which is second on the Order Paper, after the Leader of the Opposition's amendment. Does your decision on that amendment rule out the selection of my amendment in tomorrow's debate? If our amendment were selected, it would give us the opportunity to vote on the substantial matters contained in it.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman looks at Standing Order No. 32, he will see that my discretion to allow a second amendment is confined to the last day of the debate on the Queen's Speech. I have not yet considered that matter. Today, we have the Leader of the Opposition's amendment.

5.22 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move, at the end of the Question, to add:

but humbly regret that the Gracious Speech lacks any coherent strategy to regenerate Britain's cities and urban areas, contains proposals to diminish local accountability and undermine the quality of local services, especially housing, and to introduce the poll tax; and regret those Government proposals which will disrupt Britain's education service, limit choice, restrict opportunity, threaten standards and lead to greater central control.

I congratulate the Secretary of State on his reappointment to his position. I guess that, like us, he shares the hope that he will have to spend more time in this Parliament on future effective legislation and less time on retrospective legislation, putting right the incompetent previous acts of his predecessors. I express commiserations to the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson)

[Dr. John Cunningham]

who, in spite of our differences, always treated my hon. Friends and me with courtesy and consideration in our dealings with him.

The recognition by the Government of the need to have more urgent and more effective address to the needs of Britain's cities and urban areas is welcome. The Labour party has believed for many years in the need for new policies and mechanisms to deal with the deteriorating circumstances in many urban communities. A huge consensus for action for change has developed outside Parliament and outside politics, led by voluntary organisations, the churches and professional bodies. Given the mountain of evidence and the broad nature of views in that consensus, it is extraordinary that it has taken eight years for the Conservative Government to get the problems of millions of British citizens back to the top of the agenda.

It was over a decade ago that a Labour Government recognised that need, when they conceived the ideas of partnership to begin a more sustained, coherent attempt to improve the physical environment: employment opportunities, community facilities, housing, education and morale in neglected city and urban communities. The principles and ideas embodied in partnership are as valid now as then. The problems are well defined. We all know that, while some areas of all our cities and towns are bright, vibrant, attractive, prosperous and reasonably safe and secure, although increasingly less so, too many of our urban communities are forced to live in awful conditions of unfit housing, high rates of deprivation, unemployment and crime, and have little hope of change unless policies are changed dramatically.

We know that the people want again to make a contribution to rebuilding Britain's economy, our manufacturing base. We know, as they do, how vital it is that our cities should be strong, attractive, thriving and well-managed communities because in the ebb and flow of national, indeed international, change, the cities will always be central to millions of people as the places in which they most want to live and work.

However, a visit to many of our major cities today, such as Glasgow, Newcastle upon Tyne, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Coventry, Birmingham and London, demonstrates the failures of Government policies over the past eight years and the damage resulting from those policy failures. We see industrial decline, dereliction, social injustice, the miseries of persistent high unemployment, low pay and racial prejudice. We see that the welfare state can no longer guarantee the people's welfare. Why is that? Why are large areas of our major towns and cities so neglected? Who benefits from such neglect? Not their citizens, not Britain. Not the British people, whether they live in town or country.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The hon. Gentleman said that the Labour party recognised those problems some 10 years ago. Will he tell the House, and, I suppose, the nation, why the worst problems of housing, education, deprivation, industrial decline and unemployment take place without exception in areas controlled by Labour local authorities? Why have they not done anything about them?

Dr. Cunningham: I intend to spend the next 20 minutes addressing the House on why those circumstances are as

they are, but I regret giving way to the hon. Gentleman because I shall develop my speech in my own way. I say simply that what he says is not true. What has happened, on the contrary, is that in election after election at local level, the Tory party has been driven from office in the inner cities and urban areas, leaving manifest problems in its wake—for example, in Liverpool.

Britain is weakened by that weakening of our cities, which were and should be the backbone of our economy, the centres of British innovation in science, the arts and medicine, as well as in industry. Why are school teachers demoralised and schools falling down? Why are we unable to fight crime as effectively as we should? Why is so much housing, whether public or private, rundown and in need of repair? Why are so many of our young people unemployed? Why are so many women afraid in their own cities, even in their own homes?

It is not that Tory policies have not been tried. It is not that the Tories have not had time. They have had eight years. It is not that their policies have not been tried extensively. There have been 43 Acts of Parliament on local government alone since 1979. It is not that Tory Ministers have not tried to trick their way through, either. They have tricked local government, local communities and even the law. On an unprecedented number of occasions, Conservative Ministers have acted outside their legal powers to frustrate local authorities, and, when they lose in the courts, do they concede graciously? On no; they legislate retrospectively to make their actions lawful.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): One of the Tory policies on the inner cities that has worked quite well is that of establishing urban development corporations, particularly in London. Does the hon. Gentleman really think that the Labour authorities in east London could have achieved in a million years what the London Docklands development corporation has achieved in seven?

Dr. Cunningham: I am always generous in giving way to hon. Members, but I do not intend to give way if they intervene on different parts of the argument. The hon. Gentleman must know full well that I shall be coming to urban development corporations in a moment.

Yes, Tory Ministers have had time; they have tried; they have tricked their way through from time to time—the Secretary of State is the best example of that. They have failed to meet the challenge of necessary change in our communities. To date, the record is one of failure and incompetence, but the Government's systematic removal of financial support for our inner cities has been no accident. It was not incompetence. The massive, cumulative reductions now total almost £21.6 billion in rate support grant alone. The 60 per cent. reduction in housing investment, the abolition of the traditional urban programme and all the regular annual cuts have not been the result of incompetence—they have been deliberate acts of policy. The massive, bureaucratic, contradictory and inconsistent legislation has made the sensible management of social services, housing, education and other services immeasurably more difficult for those who are responsible for the affairs of our cities.

It has been interesting to hear and read some of the speeches of Ministers and former Ministers in the debate. Take, for example, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). He said:

"We want to make it possible for growth and prosperity to return to the inner cities."

However, we must be fair to him, because he said that in 1979 when he was the Secretary of State for the Environment. He is still saying the same today. On Monday, he urged his ministerial colleagues to take powers. Where has he been these past eight years? Ministers have taken powers all right. There have been 43 Acts of Parliament and next week there will be another Local Government Bill. One thing is certain with this Government: there is always a Local Government Bill, and a permanent state of legislature change — always with the effect of giving Ministers more powers, always centralising power, always diminishing the power, role, freedom and flexibility of elected local government and often strengthening the power of non-elected local administrations.

Ministers have not taken only powers — they have taken the money, too. Consider what the Conservative Government have done to funding in the partnership and programme authorities — those councils in the very inner cities and urban communities that we are discussing today. Government figures show that between 1981 and 1987 the reductions in grant to partnership and programme authorities amounted to £9.8 billion, while special programme funding was at £1.9 billion. The reductions were five times greater than the additional funding.

It used to be accepted that councils' main programmes were the most important tools in the process of regeneration, but the Government have abandoned that approach. The special programmes are hopelessly inadequate to solve the problems. Moreover, the collapse of manufacturing industry has had devastating additional effects on many inner city and urban areas, compounding the problems that they face. In addition, when one recognises that housing investment programmes in those same areas have been slashed from £2 billion in 1979 to £621 million this year, and that the loss of housing subsidy totals £1.4 billion, it is impossible not to see the damage that the Government's policies have done.

The plethora of conflicting, confused, contradictory legislation, and the financial powers that have been condemned as so damaging even by the Audit Commission and by any reasonable person, should lead anyone to conclude that the position of local government in many of these areas has become impossible.

The Government are in danger of compounding these failures, as the *Financial Times* said in a leading article yesterday. Like our amendment, the FT concludes that the Government have no coherent strategy or philosophy for the future of local government in Britain. Like us, that newspaper questions the motives and the methods of the Government. To his credit, the right hon. Member for Henley called, as we do, for a coherent Government strategy to deal with these problems. Few outside the Conservative party — in Parliament, at least — believe that we can solve the problems of the inner cities and urban areas by ad hoc, piecemeal, unco-ordinated, ill-considered change of the type that we have experienced and which is proposed.

The Government propose again to diminish the constitutional position of elected local government. Few believe that that can lead to more effective, more sensitive, better quality, more open or responsive public services in education, housing provision or social services.

That is not to say that the status quo is acceptable to us. No one can be content with a position in which millions of our fellow citizens suffer inadequate housing, education, health and environment! Change is not only necessary but inevitable. How we manage that change is at the centre of the political differences between the Labour party and the Government. It is time for a new agenda for local government. We believe that the reform of local government functions, structure and finance should be on that agenda. That, too, is a widely held view — except, apparently, in the present Cabinet.

There should be a White Paper on inner-city policies. The last one — regrettably, the only major study of urban policy — was launched by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) when he was Secretary of State for the Environment in 1977, a decade ago. The Government should respond quickly and positively to the realistic, reasonable requests from Jeremy Beecham of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and Margaret Hodge of the Association of London Authorities for the opening of a new, constructive dialogue in what they describe as a spirit of co-operation. Such discussions should also include the voluntary organisations from the beginning. Their considerable expertise will be invaluable if they are consistently involved.

Ministers, and especially the Prime Minister, should recognise that, so long as we depend for local administration and delivery of crucial services on institutions with no real autonomy, Government and Parliament cannot escape the ultimate responsibility for the quality and effectiveness of those services. The record and current attitude of the Government is to take power and autonomy away from local councils and local people, c e appwhile laying the blame for failure at local level.

The Government hold directly conflicting views. In industry they call for local and regional initiatives and solutions, the market solution, but in local government policy the Government centralise more and more power. However, they cannot centralise the ideas and the knowledge so essential to good local government. The Prime Minister and successive Secretaries of State apparently cannot accept, let alone work with, the competition of ideas in a plural democratic society.

What about the Government's policies and initiatives? On Monday, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster described Government priorities. He said that they were "to ensure that the benefits of a property-owning democracy and an enterprise economy . . ."

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not against the rules of the House for an hon. Member to read a newspaper in the Chamber during the course of a debate?

Mr. Speaker: That is of course true and I hope that no hon. Member is doing so.

Dr. Cunningham: The Chancellor of the Duchy said: "to ensure that the benefits of a property-owning democracy and an enterprise economy reach those parts of the country that they have not yet reached". — [*Official Report*, 29 June 1987; Vol. 118, c. 348.]

It sounded faintly like an advert for German beer except that the Government's product is a lot of gas, a bit of froth and a bitter taste. They have taken a plethora of initiatives of limited value and impact. They have proposed city action teams, task forces, urban development grants,

[Dr. Cunningham]

urban regeneration grants, urban development corporations and Mr. Richard Branson. Several are obscure, with few, if any, new cash resources. Others, like urban development corporations, are more significant but even in total they fall hopelessly short of the scale and nature of the task.

I challenge Ministers to explain their objectives for these policies and to explain what they propose in the Queen's Speech. Can they tell us what they think these initiatives will have achieved by the end of this Parliament? There is still an absence of any clear sense of purpose and of a strategy to bring resources back to the inner cities in anything like sufficient quality or quantity. No one seems to know who is in charge. Is it the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, or the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry? According to today's *Financial Times*, in a period of a few hours yesterday, no fewer than four different Cabinet Ministers claimed overall responsibility for heading this alleged drive to solve inner city problems. Who is in charge? Who is responsible?

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Richard Branson. Virgin on the ridiculous.

Dr. Cunningham: None of these initiatives will bring any new freedom of choice to people in the areas concerned. Indeed, urban development corporations meeting in secret deny freedom of information or involvement not just to individuals but to local authorities and to voluntary organisations as well. Such corporations are not required to co-operate in other local plans; too often, the property market leads their work and it is not led by local people's needs or choices. The London Docklands development corporation is the worst example in that regard. [AN HON. MEMBER: "It is very successful."] The hon. Gentleman says that it is very successful. In answer to questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), the Secretary of State for the Environment has admitted that the total impact of the London Docklands development corporation is a net loss of jobs in the area concerned. That was the Government's answer during Question Time.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): That answer was about jobs coming in and about jobs lost through closures. There was a net loss of 517 jobs. Does the answer not show that the urban development corporations cannot be a national model because large areas of public land adjacent to the City of London are being sold and the plans for them do not meet the urgent needs of the inhabitants of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham? It is not regeneration at all.

Dr. Cunningham: I share my hon. Friend's concern, but that is not to say that we are against the principle of development corporations. However, in reality they are failing to meet the needs of the very local people that the Government say they are expressly trying to assist. No one can convince me that the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) can afford an £80,000 apartment in the docklands. They are being priced out of the development corporation area because of what is going on there in the property market.

To be effective, spending and development must be with the participation of local communities and should not be undertaken on their behalf or imposed on them. The

dockland experiment and experience shows that public investment must come first. That is the lesson from American experience and of the best of local government. Absence of such participation is exactly what many Tories complain about when they criticise local councils. However, it is exactly what they now apparently support and propose in their policies on central direction and control.

It is sad to see that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has lost the battle with the Secretary of State for the Environment over contract compliance legislation. Again, the American experience is clear; again, legislation is necessary; and again I emphasise that the Labour party stands ready to assist with the passage of sensible contract compliance proposals.

It is deplorable to see the complete absence of any intention to strengthen the Race Relations Act 1976 or legislation to end racial harassment in housing. In 1983, in similar circumstances, the Conservative party manifesto said:

"Our goal is to make Britain the best housed nation in Europe."

In the eight years of Tory policy, investment in housing has been slashed. Millions of houses are now unfit and 1 million more have fallen into disrepair, giving the nation a total housing repair bill of a staggering £50 billion. That includes many thousands of families in owner-occupied inner-city houses who cannot even get improvement grants. About 250,000 elderly people want to move to more suitable accommodation, such as bungalows or ground-floor flats, but cannot do so because Government policies stop councils building that accommodation and releasing family homes to those on the waiting list. The Tory attitude to housing is that its provision should be left to the market, that somehow Adam Smith's hidden hand will ensure that enough housing will be provided and that divine intervention will ensure that, as fewer resources go into council housing, more will go into the private sector. That has not happened, and it is unlikely to happen.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): In every sense of the word, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is an honourable gentleman. Will he take this opportunity to express dismay at some of the propaganda put forward by his party during the general election campaign? It said quite clearly that the Conservative Government's proposals were to privatise council properties over the heads of tenants and that that would lead to Rachman-type landlords and high rents. Now that the hon. Gentleman knows about Government policy, will he take the opportunity to refute that?

Dr. Cunningham: I certainly will not refute that, not least because I said it in several speeches during the election campaign. Until such time as we see the detail of the Government's intention, that remains our view about their intentions and proposals. It is our view not just about people in local government housing, but about elderly people in sheltered dwellings schemes as well.

In addition to all that, we are now apparently to have a poll tax throughout Britain — the only democratic country to employ such a manifestly unfair and regressive tax. The tax will not be related in any way to people's ability to pay. Again, Tory confusion is evident because the impact of the tax will be most severe in the inner cities, as the Government's own figures show. It will mean startling increases in bills in inner London and most major

industrial conurbations. It will further divide Britain because, inner London apart, the people of the north of England and Scotland will be hardest hit while people in the prosperous parts of the south of England will benefit. The poll tax will particularly hit extended Asian families in inner cities and urban areas.

We know, on the admission of Ministers, and of the right hon. Member for Brent, North in particular, that the poll tax will be at least twice as expensive as rates to collect. The poll tax will be much easier to evade than the rates. Those who pay will have to pay more to make up for those who do not register and do not pay.

We are told by *The Daily Telegraph* that the Government are considering a massive bureaucratic and costly system of Big Brother checks to trap people at swimming pools, bowling greens, libraries, museums and social services departments. We read that many Conservative Members and former Ministers have suddenly discovered the horrors of all this since the conclusion of the election campaign.

On Monday, the right hon. Member for Henley said:

"Twice I have advised Conservative Cabinets and shadow Cabinets against this form of local authority finance, and twice, at least, they have accepted my advice. I must say that I have not yet seen any reason to change my mind. I shall listen to the reasons why my right hon. Friends have changed theirs."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1987; Vol. 118, c. 281.]

We did not know he had changed his mind. On 9 December 1986, when a Conservative Back Bencher, he voted on a Second Reading for the principle of a poll tax for Scotland. To make absolutely sure, later, on 5 March 1987, he voted for the Third Reading of the Bill confirming all the details of the legislation of a poll tax for Scotland. He must have a short memory.

We know that people such as the Prime Minister will save almost £2,000 a year from the poll tax, while many pensioners, single parents, student nurses, apprentices and unemployed people will pay more. We also know that we do not have a proposed poll tax from any sense of fairness on her part. The whole world knows that a poll tax is unfair. It is a tax specifically excluded by the American constitution.

The poll tax results from a decade-long search to redeem a reckless political promise by the Prime Minister to abolish domestic rates, made without the slightest idea about how to replace them. That included a search for a Secretary of State and a Tory party careless enough, self-seeking enough, divisive enough and reckless enough to legislate and force it through. After four previous attempts, the right hon. Lady has found a Secretary of State who represents unfairness personified. He will force the legislation through regardless of the social, economic, constitutional, and I dare say political, damage it will inevitably cause.

We on the Labour side look at the people who support the proposal and at the party that supports it: we look at them with sorrow for the British people whom it will harm, and with contempt for those who will support it in the Lobbies. It is not surprising that people in many urban areas and inner cities reject Tory candidates and Tory councils. People recognise the damaging consequences of Tory policies. They have to live with them. The Government programme shows no sign of a coherent response and no evidence of direction. That is why we tabled our amendment and that is why we shall divide the House tonight.

5.54 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I thank the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) for his kind words about myself and particularly about my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). I am grateful to him and in turn I commiserate with him on the two perils which he has recently had to face: first, getting back here, and, secondly, staying on the Opposition Front Bench. The second peril is still to come. He survived the first peril by a squeak. I gather from his constituents that the poor performance of the Labour party in the opinion polls persuaded them that it was safe to keep him without risking the nightmare of a Labour Government. I only hope that the hard Left will take such a charitable view when it comes to next week's elections and that we can look forward to working with the hon. Gentleman in the future. If he does not succeed, he will at least be spared a very hard legislative programme that my Department will be putting forward during the coming Session.

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for his felicitations. I ought to thank him because, as he ought to know, when he came to my constituency and in an injudicious speech announced that there was no need for any new council housing in Copeland and no need for any new bungalows for pensioners or people with disabilities, he encouraged a few waverers to vote for me.

Mr. Ridley: I seem to remember that the subject of my speech in the hon. Gentleman's constituency was the future of the nuclear industry. I do not want to open old wounds. It would be much better if the hon. Gentleman and I could continue in the felicitous form in which I started my speech and, if I may say so, in which he started his speech.

First, I should like briefly to amplify the proposals in the Gracious Speech which concern the privatisation of the water industry. Before legislating to return water authorities to private ownership we will bring forward a Bill early this Session to allow water authorities to prepare for water supply and sewerage functions to be privatised. The Bill will also permit compulsory trials to be undertaken of water metering for households, so that they may test this as a fairer system of charging for water. We have announced that we intend to establish a national rivers authority to take over pollution control and other regulatory functions of the water authorities at the same time as the water authorities are privatised.

A decision has not yet been taken whether it will be possible to include this second, longer Bill in this Session of Parliament, and, as we intend to publish a consultation paper and have full consultation on our proposals, it looks somewhat unlikely.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is there any possibility in the future of the metering of water being made compulsory rather than optional, as at the moment? Will there be metering of sewage? Does the Secretary of State now accept that it is impossible to privatise those functions of the water authorities that relate to the cleaning-up of pollution and that, therefore, the real burdens of public expenditure will be kept by the Government and not saved by privatisation?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman will want to see the consultative paper, but he will find that our new proposals

[Mr. Ridley]

properly leave with Government the responsibilities that are the Government's in those matters. He will see that the Bill gives the water authorities power to set up trials for metering in trial areas where there would have to be power for them to insist on metering to study the effects of it based on demand and on people's behaviour.

Mr. Allan Roberts: On people's behaviour?

Mr. Ridley: I will amplify that. The point is the effect on demand of various charging strategies.

Today's debate is about those parts of the Gracious Speech related to the inner cities—local services and education. In choosing to link the issues for debate, the Opposition at least seem to recognise that they go together as part of a coherent strategy, which is what the hon. Member for Copeland wanted. The strategy is not short-term, piecemeal or cosmetic. Inner city revival can arise only from a radical shift in the balance of power to the people who live in inner cities and use local services. It can be based only on private sector-led growth.

Local authorities are indeed crucial. On their attitudes, their levels of spending and levels of rates and their policies on matters such as planning, housing and education hang the finely balanced decisions which private investors take about whether to locate and expand in one area rather than another. Local authorities perform that vital function well where they have an understanding of the requirements for business growth, but in too many of our inner cities that has not proved to be the case.

Last week, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett)—the first unblushing maiden of this Parliament—made a plea for us to leave matters to inner city local authorities. He asked for "the opportunity to do things for ourselves."—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1987; Vol 118, c. 73.]

Translated, that means spending more public money. The hon. Gentleman has been doing that for a long time in Sheffield—[*Interruption.*] The House should listen to these figures. Last year, spending per adult in Sheffield was £755, which is £82 above the national average and £153 above GRE. The business rate was 342p—139p or 65 per cent. above the national average business rate of 213.2p. The average rate for the metropolitan districts was 265p, so he was 77p or 29 per cent. above the metropolitan district average. On top of that, he has a deferred purchase loan of £110 million. It is clear to people who care about the appalling problems of Sheffield that, despite that massive expenditure, he is not going in the right direction to solve those problems.

The record of the Labour party in local government on inner city regeneration has not been happy. There was talk earlier about the docklands—

Dr. Cunningham: I hope that the Secretary of State notified my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) that he intended to mention him in this way. That is the normal courtesy of the House, as I wrote to the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) to tell him that I would be mentioning him in the debate. In view of what the Secretary of State said, can he explain why the Audit Commission described Sheffield as one of the most efficient and well-managed cities in the country? Why does he think that, at council and parliamentary level, people support the Labour party in Sheffield in such massive numbers?

Mr. Ridley: I followed the example of the hon. Member for Brightside of not warning me that he would be speaking about these problems last Thursday. I never dreamt that he would not be here for the debate during which those matters would be discussed.

Mr. Allan Roberts: So the Secretary of State did not tell him.

Mr. Ridley: And he did not tell me. My point is that cities such as Sheffield will not recover until they get their business rates to a level where they can start to attract businesses.

The record of the Labour party on inner city regeneration has not been happy. There used to be a committee of London boroughs called the docklands joint committee, which met to plan the revival of London's docklands. The committee sat for five years under Labour as well as Conservative Governments. It achieved almost nothing. The dereliction simply spread. Since the London Docklands development corporation was established in 1981, the area has been transformed, with 7,000 new houses having been built or under construction, the provision of 10,000 permanent jobs, more than 400 companies starting up or moving into the LDDC area and £2.2 billion of private investment being committed.

During the past few months, we have added to the list of London and Merseyside four new urban development corporations—the Black Country, Trafford Park, Teesside and Tyne and Wear development corporations—each charged with regenerating their areas. They are now establishing themselves. They will bring a single-minded approach to their areas which could lead over a decade to private investment between three and six times the initial pump-priming investment by the public sector. We shall also be setting up mini urban development corporations to tackle smaller sites. They will have the same powers as the larger UDCs, but above all they will create the business-friendly environment and single-minded approach which are the necessary pre-conditions for regeneration.

The hon. Member for Brightside and his friends have not learnt the lessons of this approach. There can never be enough public money to do everything through municipal ownership, nationalisation and services provided by highly unionised public sector services. It is inherently inefficient, and, worse, the necessary level of rates drives businesses and business men alike away. A partnership between local and central Government on inner city policy must be one between partners who believe in attracting private enterprise and capital through a constructive attitude to the private sector, low rates, sensible planning and the pursuit of excellence in education, housing and many other essential services. Partnerships where there is no consensus seldom seem to work. But with compatible partners, much can be done, and I believe increasingly that there will be more compatibility when the practice of local democratic accountability conforms with the theory.

The present rating system gives neither accountability to local residents nor effective control over local authority spending to the Government. Spending has continued to increase inexorably. During the past eight years, it has increased in real terms by 13 per cent. In the current financial year, local authorities are budgeting to spend, on average, 4 per cent. above the rate of inflation. That average conceals wide variations between authorities.

Inner city authorities have increased spending way above inflation. They have been able to do that because, in these areas, as few as one in four adults pays full rates. So people have been content for the costs of local authority services to be met by others.

Profligate spending has not only driven employers and would-be employers away and thus lost jobs, but resources have been taken away from other areas by the rate support grant formula as the spiral of inner city decline causes the rate base in inner city areas to diminish, while their needs—as expressed in the GREs—grow. People who live in frugal shires, which many of my hon. Friends represent, know all too well that their annual rate support grants dwindle and their rates increase with little relationship either to their ability to pay rates or to their use of local services. Last year, many of my hon. Friends were clamouring for a reform of the present system—and that was after the most generous rate support grant settlement in years.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my right hon. Friend not lose sight of the fact that need does not always exist only in the inner areas of a city? In my area, on the edge of Birmingham, there is a very high proportion of one-parent families. There is great resentment that so much money is spent on the inner city while need exists outside. In one inner city area, a series of hanging baskets was placed in the streets, which looked very pretty. But they had all been stolen within 24 hours and were sold on what is called the black market. If that money had been spent to help schools in the outer areas, a great deal of help would have been available for one-parent families which is not available now. Will my right hon. Friend remember that need does not only exist in inner areas?

Mr. Ridley: I will of course remember what my hon. Friend has said. She will be encouraged to learn that many of her constituents, particularly the single and one-parent families, will benefit largely from the community charge.

As I have said, the present local government finance system is not only grossly unfair; it provides very poor accountability. The only effective solution to the problem is to ensure that all pay something towards the costs of local services. That is why we propose to phase out domestic rates and replace them with a flat rate community charge payable by all adults in each area. We set out that policy at length in the Green Paper on the reform of local government finance. We have consulted on the policy and we have published all the details. My right hon. and hon. Friends fought and won the recent election campaign on that policy. On the now famous basis of "What you see is what you get" many people voted for us on the basis that we would introduce the community charge. We should not and will not let those people down. For Opposition Members to suggest that, having published all the details of the reform and having been elected to office, we should now immediately turn round and tear those details up is to deny the verdict of the electorate.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): All Opposition Members are well aware that when the poll tax issue was really tested before the electorate in Scotland, the result was a crushing defeat for the Conservative party. I want to pick up on one critical issue. The Secretary of State said that the fundamental principle of the poll tax was that everyone should pay a flat rate charge. Does that mean therefore

that the undertakings given during the election campaign to cover the 20 per cent. minimum paid by the poorest through housing benefit is to be abandoned? If not, what is the Government's policy?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman has asked about the 20 per cent. paid by the poorest. The Government have made it absolutely clear that up to 80 per cent. rebates will be available for those on low incomes. With regard to the 20 per cent. income support will be uprated by the equivalent of the average of the 20 per cent. of the community charge. We have always stated that. That means that some people on income support will be slightly better off, although some may be slightly worse off.

Locally raised non-domestic rates will be replaced by the national non-domestic rate set at uniform poundage by the Government. There will be a revaluation of non-domestic property in 1990. The national non-domestic rate will not be able to increase each year by more than the rate of inflation. The proceeds of the national non-domestic rate—

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ridley: I will give way in a minute.

The proceeds will be distributed to all authorities as an equal amount per adult. There will be a transitional period of up to five years. The effect of that in Sheffield, for example, would have been to bring down the business rate by 30 per cent. That will be a great help in bringing more investment and more jobs to the inner city areas that we have been discussing. Indeed, the whole of the community charge and the new system of local government finance has been designed largely with a view to reducing the rate burden of business and industry of the areas about which the House is most concerned.

Mr. Ashdown: The Secretary of State rightly drew attention earlier to the importance of lower rates, business confidence and success. How does he square that statement with the fact that his proposals will overnight, without any increase in services, mean an increase to the business community in business rates which could in Somerset, for instance, mean an increase of 20 per cent. or 30 per cent.?

Mr. Ridley: I do not believe that "overnight" is the right word. There are transitional arrangements. At the same time, we do not know the results of the revaluations, which might have very different results in different parts of the country. All I can say is that it must be true that, with a total sum of money that is close-ended, if the rates are to come down for businesses in inner city areas, they are bound to go up for other businesses in other places. I would not deny that for a moment.

The community charge is a charge made for the services provided by a local authority. It is like a service charge, which is rather different from a poll tax. Against that background I must mention three allegations that have been made about it—curiously enough, mainly since the election.

First, the community charge is said to be inequitable between the north and the south. However, surely the right principle is that between two different areas, having taken account of differing needs through needs grant or the GREs, people should pay the same charge for the same level of services, except of course that the less well-off will be protected by rebates and uprating of benefits.

[Mr. Ridley]

Let me give an example. If we consider two district councils, Copeland in Cumbria and Cotswold in Gloucestershire, we see that this year in Copeland every adult will enjoy services to the value of £689 while in Cotswold the figure is £589. The average rates bill per adult in Copeland is £162. In Cotswold it is £230. Therefore, my constituents were charged £68 more per head than the constituents of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), although £100 per head more was spent on the hon. Gentleman's constituents than on mine. Those rate bills were after extra grants had been paid to Copeland on account of its needs. After taking account of the hon. Gentleman's constituency's needs, higher spending in his constituency resulted in a lower charge for which my constituents have had to pay. That is not fair.

Dr. Cunningham: The Secretary of State says "That is not fair." He should continue with his comparison. If he compares unemployment, bad housing and deprivation in Copeland and the resource base, and if he compares the political administrations, he will discover that Copeland is Labour-administered and his area is Tory-administered. In Copeland the district council has not increased the rates for six years. This year, the rates were reduced. Is the Secretary of State claiming that all that should be thrown away for some ephemeral gain from a poll tax and a uniform business rate? He is talking nonsense.

Mr. Ridley: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not like this point. The fact remains that his constituents are being subsidised by my constituents for no other reason than the fact that property and rateable values in my constituency are higher than those in his constituency. The needs of his constituents are taken account of in the GREs. He does not have a leg to stand on. Had the community charge been in place this year, the charge in Copeland would have been £258 and £180 in Cotswold. My constituents would still have £100 less spent on them per adult than the hon. Gentleman's constituents, but they would have paid £78 less per adult. That would be a much fairer system and a better signal for people to realise that they receive what they pay for.

Dr. Cunningham: Rubbish.

Mr. Ridley: Another argument is that it is inequitable that all should pay the same amount. It is simply not true to say that all will pay the same for local authority services. As I have said, those on low incomes will be protected by the 80 per cent. rebate and the uprating of benefits by 20 per cent. of the average community charge. Old people living in residential homes and the severely mentally handicapped will be entirely exempt. Students will pay only 20 per cent.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): When my right hon. Friend refers to those on low incomes, is he referring exclusively to those on supplementary benefit or to those somewhat above that level?

Mr. Ridley: There will be a taper from those who will rely entirely on income supplement to those whose income is slightly above it, but the precise details have not been put forward.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ridley: I must get on.

Secondly, about half of local authority expenditure will be met by the Exchequer, which is financed by a most progressive income tax. The better-off will certainly contribute more through the national tax system, but they will not have to pay a premium on top through the local tax system. That is as it should be. Redistributive taxation should be for one authority only—the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The third allegation was made last Thursday by the Leader of the Opposition, who gave the House one of the best imitations that I have ever seen of Neil Kinnock addressing a ticket-only Labour election rally. All that was missing was Brahms. Among other schoolboy howlers, the right hon. Gentleman alleged that the community charge was a tax on voting. He does not understand the two meanings of the word poll. The only way to avoid the tax was to surrender the right to vote, he said. That allegation is totally groundless for three reasons.

First, the right to vote will not depend on registration for or payment of the community charge. Secondly, it will not be possible to avoid registration for the community charge by failing to register to vote. Thirdly, there will be completely separate registers compiled on a different basis for community charge and for electoral purposes. I hope that he will not repeat that nonsense in the future.

Our proposals are the only solution that achieves accountability and preserves true local democracy. At a time when the Labour party in local government is getting more extreme, and when the spending of local authorities takes so much of the nation's resources, it is the only possible solution which will save local government as an institution with real powers and real discretion. None of the alternatives on offer does anything to improve accountability.

Dr. Cunningham: The Secretary of State has been very generous in giving way, but it is important that this matter is clear and on the record. Is the Secretary of State giving the House and the country a categorical assurance that there will not be, under any circumstances or conditions, cross-referencing between the electoral register and the registration of people to pay poll tax? Is that what the Secretary of State is saying?

Mr. Ridley: That is an absurd question. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the electoral register is published. I suspect that he had it during the election and put "Labour", "Liberal", "Conservative" and "doubtful" against it all the way down. I cannot possibly promise that nobody will look at the electoral register and the hon. Gentleman knows that as well as I do.

If the present system were left in place there would have to be a revaluation. We could not continue with figures based on values from 1973. Those who are concerned about turbulence with the new system should consider what the effect would be of moving, under the present grossly unfair and unaccountable system, to new rateable values after all this time.

There must be an incentive for councils to control their costs. The community charge provides that incentive, and our new Local Government Bill that was published last Friday provides local authorities with a way of so doing. This legislation sets out six services—costing authorities some £3 billion a year—which will be exposed to competitive tendering. It provides a power for more

services to be added to the list. It outlaws abuse of non-commercial contract conditions that are so beloved by Labour authorities, and I am glad that the hon. Member for Copeland says that he supports this in principle.

Over the past year the evidence of the potential savings from competitive tendering has continued to mount. The Audit Commission, for example, has estimated that over £500 million could be saved from local authorities' budgets for housing maintenance, refuse collection and vehicle maintenance.

We have confirmation of the benefits from an unlikely source — the National and Local Government Officers Association. In February it commissioned some opinion poll research on privatisation and, according to an article in *Local Government Chronicle*, NALGO reported:

"Researchers find such strong feelings that privatisation is an extremely good idea that they advised that though it is an issue of great importance to NALGO, it should probably be avoided in the campaign to defend public services."

The report went on to say:

"The overriding perception is that private equals efficient, which means the principle of privatisation is accepted as a solution to the public sector's inefficiency."

Worse was to come for NALGO. It held a conference on "Privatisation: an effective response" and found that some of its members

"even want to work in the private sector, expecting higher wages and better promotion chances".

It is no accident that some of the areas of greatest inner city deprivation and decay lie where there is the greatest dominance of rented housing. This is not the time or place for me to go into the details of what the Government propose for the future of housing. Those details will be made available to the House shortly, and in the autumn there will be a major Bill that deals with the Government's response to the serious problems of housing.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Does the Secretary of State agree, as he has just made a point about privatisation and efficiency, that it has been a huge failure in Halifax? We had the launch of the urban renewal house unit, which is now called Estate Action and we waited 16 months for Wimpey to come up with the money. We have now been left with 320 dwellings. The Government would not allow us to borrow, but will they allow us to do so now because Wimpey has pulled out after keeping us waiting for 16 months, thus allowing properties to fall into dereliction? Will the Secretary of State allow Calderdale council to borrow the money? Does he agree that in this instance the private sector was inefficient?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot comment on that circumstance because I do not know the details, but I shall make inquiries and write to the hon. Lady.

With the major reform of housing policy that we are proposing, the measures in the Gracious Speech will not only provide a lot of work for the House but will provide the most comprehensive set of instruments for tackling dereliction and poor housing, poor councils, poor schools, poor job opportunities and poor environment, which are the components of the inner city problem. The Labour party is said to be trying to adjust to the "new world" — the world of prosperity, wider ownership and more freedom and opportunity. I hope that its response to all our policy initiatives will not remain sterile and negative. If it attacks these proposals, whether it admits it or not, it will be seeking to perpetuate the problems that we are debating today.

6.27 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I welcome the Government's determination to tackle the problems of the inner city. I hope that their determination will be accompanied by a recognition that many of those problems have been aggravated by the policies that the Government have pursued over the last eight years.

I hope that we will not see yet another Whitehall-organised and directed campaign in which no fewer than seven Government Departments compete with each other for headlines in the national press, while little changes for the ordinary people who live in the inner cities.

Nor do we want to see another series of initiatives that will create more jobs outside the target areas than they offer to the unemployed in the inner city. Our first priority, if we want to tackle the problems of the inner cities successfully, should be to listen to the people who live in those areas and see how far it is possible to incorporate their ideas and solutions into the programmes that we are putting forward.

Housing figures strongly in the Gracious Speech. It has been my experience that if one goes to the most depressed and run-down council estate the most practical advice usually comes not from the architect who created the problem in the first place, not from the academics, however well intentioned and impressive, but from the tenants who live in those estates and who understand the problems. They want entry phones, changes in the layout of the estate to reduce the risks of crime and vandalism and extra staff to supervise what goes on and to keep the place clean and tidy. Their basic view is that essential services such as lifts and lights should work. They have plenty of ideas for improvements but their ideas cost money. All too often the money is simply not there. Certainly it is not there in sufficient volume to deal with the problems.

If we really want to improve difficult, run-down estates we must recognise that providing the resources is just as important as providing new forms of management and ownership. There is a wide measure of agreement in all parties that we should try to break down the over-centralised, remote, monolithic management of council housing. But it is no good doing that unless we provide the resources to back up change and to make estates decent places in which to live. If we do not do that but simply change management style and organisation, the cynicism will continue, as will the sense that nobody really cares.

I have for long argued the case for housing co-operatives. We should ensure that tenants have much more control over what goes on in their homes and on their estates, but we cannot create housing co-operatives overnight. People must want to come together in a co-operative and they must develop the ability to take the responsibilities involved in managing their own estates. Let us encourage co-operatives but do not let us believe that such a solution will come rapidly.

The Government have not yet spelt out what they mean by the housing action trust approach. Perhaps they are considering what is happening in the Thamesmead development which is now run by a housing action trust. All its members are elected by the residents. That solution can be applied elsewhere. There is much good sense behind it, but once again the problem is one of resources. Thamesmead is not yet up and running. It has not yet taken over full responsibility for running the area, and it has major resources problems despite the valuable

[Mr. John Cartwright]

development land that is available to it. I wonder whether other housing action trusts will be able to deliver the goods and improve our run-down council estates.

The other aspect of the housing problem which we must begin to face is the desperate housing shortage in the inner cities. In my area housing shortage is the worst that I have known in 20 years as an elected representative. Homelessness is growing at an alarming rate. In my local authority 234 priority homeless families are waiting for somewhere to live and another 79 potentially homeless families are behind them in the queue. Husbands and wives are compelled to live apart. The army of single homeless young people is a growing problem. They wander round and sleep rough, on friends' floors or in cars. They are totally unable to find housing in the inner London area.

I accept that many of the problems are aggravated by the length of time that it takes local authorities to relet empty property. That is also a problem of resources. There are major difficulties in putting into a decent state of repair some of the housing which we were encouraged to throw up in the 1960s and which has not stood the test of time.

Local authority administration also causes problems. Slow-moving bureaucracy means that properties are not let swiftly and are then vandalised or used by squatters with the result that even more work has to be done and the property remains outside the housing stock for even longer. But even with the most perfect local authority administration in the inner cities there are simply not enough homes to meet the need.

The Government suggest that the private landlord is the knight in shining armour who will come to the rescue. I doubt whether the private investment necessary to provide the rented housing that we need will be forthcoming. I doubt whether it can produce housing at a cost that the homeless can afford. People who want to make a profit out of housing must charge rents way beyond the reach of homeless people in the inner cities.

I would rather the Government provided more resources for housing associations and encouraged them to tackle the desperate shortage of rented accommodation than try to breathe new life into the discredited private landlord system.

The Government should also build upon the public-private partnership, which they have tentatively begun, by the use of public funds as a leverage to encourage building societies and other institutions into index-linked investment in housing. That could help provide the rented homes that we need.

I strongly endorse what the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said about the poll tax proposals. They will do nothing to improve our inner cities. I accept what he said about the injustices and the costs of the proposals. The combined effect of the community charge and the unified business rate will be that the biggest loser in terms of resources for local government will be Greater London and the biggest gainer will be the south-east of England, outside Greater London. That will merely exacerbate the existing problems. The hardest-hit residents will be in the inner London boroughs because they are likely to have to pay a great deal more. The problems will be fewer in the outer London areas and residents in the leafier areas of Surrey will be the gainers from the switch from rates to

poll tax. I am sure that the people of Surrey will welcome that, but such a financial change will accentuate the flight of people from the inner city.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The Layfield report examined the proposals for local income tax suggested by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) and his colleagues and found that they would be extremely expensive, costly and burdensome.

Mr. Cartwright: I do not accept that. I was a member of the Layfield committee and what it said stands up to the test of time. Layfield's basic proposal was that we should have a clear decision on whether we wanted local accountability or national direction. The House has not yet made that choice and the people have not yet had an opportunity of making that choice.

The impact of the poll tax will encourage the people whom we want to remain in the inner cities to move out.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): The precise consequence of the enormous increase in rates under the loony Left in London has been to drive businesses and individuals out to the shire counties, creating pressure on land and house prices and creating skill shortage problems. It is no solution to say that we should stick to the rating system.

Mr. Cartwright: I do not advocate sticking to the rating system. I advocate a switch to local income tax, which is better, fairer and more straightforward than either rates or a poll tax.

The poll tax will create enforcement problems. Evidence suggests that the mobile population in our cities will aggravate the enforcement problems simply because more people generally move around in the inner cities. Enforcement will as a result be more costly in the inner cities than elsewhere.

The hon. Member for Copeland referred to an article in *The Daily Telegraph* earlier this week about local authority officers being recruited as poll tax narks to shop people who use services without being registered. The hon. Gentleman did not need to read *The Daily Telegraph* because the proposal was included in the Government's Green Paper published in January 1986. It said:

"The task for local authorities would be to develop their information systems so that, if they were providing a service to an individual, it would be possible to check back conveniently, either before or after the event, on whether a person was registered and take steps to register those who were not."

Thus, we would actually be encouraging local authority officers, sometimes providing essential services, to act as a sort of secret police force for the poll tax collectors to ensure that everyone was swept into the net. The Secretary of State tried to pour scorn on the suggestion that there would be a risk of people who registered to vote finding their names on the poll tax register. I refer him to the Department of the Environment and Welsh Office paper on the poll tax. On the problem of the enforcement of registration, it said:

"Registration officers will be able to use the electoral role to help check the completeness of the community charge register, and vice versa."

It is therefore evident that anybody who registers to vote will make himself liable for inclusion on the poll tax register.

From what we have heard in the past week or so it seems that the Government are now to some extent

backing away from their original concept of a poll tax to be paid by every person in the community. Recently we have heard talk of a rebate system and of the idea that those on supplementary benefit would have their benefit increased to take account of the poll tax charge. Surely all that simply undermines the Government's original contention that they did not want people who voted in local elections for improved services then evading the costs of those services. The more the Government move to take away the worst rough edges of the poll tax proposals, the more they undermine that original argument for total accountability and the more they find themselves on the slippery slope towards an income-related tax for local services.

Of course, I do not object to that. I cannot understand the Secretary of State's argument this afternoon. He says that it is absolutely right, fair and proper for us to pay for national services on the basis of our income, but that it is improper for us to pay for local services on that basis. To me, that makes no sense at all. If the Government are totally and irrevocably opposed to the concept of a local income tax, they might at least listen to the expert advice of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, which rejects the whole concept of a poll tax but suggests that the Government should consider "some form of banded community charge which could better reflect ability to pay than does a flat rate tax." I hope that even at this late stage the Government will consider that.

The Government are right to stress the partnership approach in tackling the problems of our cities, but it should not be merely a public sector and private enterprise partnership. We need a series of partnerships. We need partnerships between central and local government, in the interests not of the political parties in control but of the people whom they represent. Most important, we need a partnership that involves the people of the inner cities. We should stop thinking solely in terms of people from Whitehall and Westminster, however well-intentioned, coming in from outside to do things for the people of the inner cities. We should be trying to give those who live in the inner cities a real chance of standing on their own feet and sorting out their own problems.

6.44 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): I very much agree with the last remarks of the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright). The idea that the problems of the inner cities can be solved simply by people moving in and doing things for them can be fallacious. The inner cities will succeed in solving their problems only through their own strength and determination.

I broadly welcome the Gracious Speech, which marks the continuation of the very successful policies which we have been pursuing since 1979 and which flow from the remarkable endorsement of those policies by the electorate in the general election. If I had to summarise the election in a nutshell, I would say that on defence policy and on economic policy we won by a knock-out but that on social policy we perhaps did no more than win on points.

It seems clear, that social policy will dominate this Session of Parliament and perhaps this Parliament as a whole. I profoundly believe that we must get it right. We have to face very important matters and we must think about them carefully. I hope, in particular, that we will think carefully about the remarks that all of us heard on

the doorsteps during the election campaign. It is remarkably good for us to have to knock on so many doors and listen to so many different people speaking to us frankly when we canvass them. I have come away with a number of very clear points that I would like to pursue.

I noted that my right hon. Friend the new Chief Secretary to the Treasury, whom I greatly respect, delivered a cautionary speech the other day about public expenditure. Clearly, we cannot abandon our public expenditure policy, but I believe that there is enough buoyancy in tax revenue at the moment for us to contemplate a number of areas in which we might provide a bit more money to good effect.

During the election campaign, one message that came over to me very clearly was the message about pensions. I was frankly surprised at the force with which old-age pensioners argued that they were pretty close to the bread line. Although we have done valuable things for them, I believe that the Government would be doing something that would be well received and very just if they could add another couple of pounds over and above what comes under the RPI to the next uprating.

I ask the Government to do what they can to relax the restrictions on the spending of the capital receipts of local authorities. It would not be right to say to the local authorities, "You can spend 100 per cent. of the capital receipts" because that would have an inflationary effect on the construction industry. But if it were possible to raise the present 20 per cent. and 30 per cent. levels that are permitted at present, adding perhaps a further 10 per cent. to each, that would make a useful contribution towards dealing with pockets of homelessness.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is here, let me say that I hope that we can do more to support civil science and the universities.

I turn to the aspects of the environment that have dominated this debate so far. I very much welcome my right hon. Friend's plans for stimulating the private rented sector by liberalising tenure and rent control. It is high time that we embarked on that process and it is a good thing to embark on it at the beginning of a new Parliament so that it is given time to be seen to work—as I believe it will—and so that we may dissipate the fears which have always existed that another Government will up-end the policy. I hope, too, that we shall support the housing associations, as the hon. Member for Woolwich suggested. There is a real need to stimulate the rented sector. We have had great success with our home ownership policies and we must now work hard on the rented sector.

I am less sure about the proposal to give council tenants the right to transfer the ownership of their homes to other landlords. That proposal needs to be thought about and explained carefully. The public will need to understand that it is a workable proposal and, if that is not possible in the near future, it might be better to leave it over for a later Session rather than rushing into it. At the moment I have an open mind about it, but I certainly have to be persuaded.

What worries me is that the proposals seem to reflect an overall exaggerated distrust of local government. We all know about the loony Left and we know that sometimes we are talking not just about lunacy but about a brutal malevolence. Nobody wants that to persist, but it seems a mistake to allow our suspicions in that regard to spread over into a generalised suspicion of local government—a

[Mr. Timothy Raison]

view that seems to be reflected in some areas of our policy. We need local government in this country. It is a fallacy that we can run everything from the centre; if we pour everything into the centre, the centre will not hold, and it is crucial for our Government to achieve a clear and positive idea of what local government can do.

Last year, in the debate on the Address I spoke about the community charge proposals that were to be introduced in Scotland. Then I expressed my doubts about the community charge on grounds of fairness and administrative viability. I cannot say that those doubts have been dispelled from my mind.

I know that the new system as a whole—of course, it consists not only of the community charge and the unified business rate, but a change in the composition of the rate support grant, which is most important—is extremely attractive to my county of Buckinghamshire. I am aware of that from the exemplification figures that I have seen and I must bear that fact in mind. I certainly believe that it is correct to look for a more sensible and objective rate support grant rather than the somewhat nonsensical system that we have had in recent years. However, we must get something that is believed to be fair and manageable. Although I believe that we should go ahead with the reform of the non-domestic rate and rate support grant system we must think a bit harder about whether we have got the right answer with the community charge. I believe that it would be perfectly possible to have the other two sides in the triangle without having the community charge as the means of providing the domestic contribution. My right hon. Friend must accept that a great deal of argument and persuasion must be gone through before many people will accept that reform.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will reply to the debate tonight. I hope that we shall not approach education in any spirit of distrust or a desire to bash local government. I accept that the Secretary of State has the job of overall supervision of the education system. The Education Act 1944 made that role absolutely clear, as did R. A. Butler when he piloted the Bill through Parliament. I believe that, in years gone by, Secretaries of State have not sufficiently exercised their role of monitoring the education system.

I believe that it is right that my right hon. Friend should take powers to provide a system of testing children as they proceed through the education system. I must confess that I wrote a pamphlet in 1976 in which I advocated the testing of children at the ages of seven, 11 and 14. Therefore, it would be rather surprising if I did not support the present proposals. Those proposals are good and I believe that it is right to have a core curriculum, as contemplated by my right hon. Friend. I believe that it should be a fairly loose curriculum and I certainly hope that it will not be a great mass of detail. However, I believe that it should provide some kind of general steer on the way in which we approach the all-important question of what is taught in our schools.

I believe that my right hon. Friend will be under a lot of pressure the whole time to get subjects added to the curriculum. He will be asked to include whatever happens to be the current concern of the day. It may be AIDS one day or child abuse on another. Such topics are important, but my right hon. Friend must be firm and say, "No, that is not what the educational core curriculum is about". The

core curriculum is concerned with the more traditional elements of education. I believe that my right hon. Friend is on the right lines and I give him my support.

I also believe it is right to give more financial control to schools and I believe that that is a welcome form of delegation. However, almost the greatest need at the present time within the education system is a period of constructive harmony and constructive tranquillity. We have witnessed a great deal of turmoil. I certainly hope that our proposals will not extend that turmoil. I am sure that my right hon. Friend understands extremely well the pressing need to get on with the business of finding the right system for determining teachers' pay. I believe that we would all like to get that problem out of the way. Perhaps I am being too optimistic, but it would be very good to solve that problem in a matter of months because, at the present time, it is bedeviling things.

My right hon. Friend must take care that he does not ram the proposals for opting out down the throat of a rather unwilling educational community. As with the proposals for transferring the ownership of council houses, I believe that the proposals for opting out need to be presented more clearly and there should be more discussion about them before they are in a condition to go through Parliament. If, after such discussion, my right hon. Friend still feels that they are the right proposals, there is no need to include them in the Education Bill that I believe my right hon. Friend will introduce in this Session. Such proposals will keep perfectly well for a later stage. I believe that it would be a great pity to bring in such proposals if they serve to undermine the otherwise positive things that my right hon. Friend has offered and, with any luck, the positive response that he will receive. The same thing applies to the proposals about the Inner London education authority, which is a difficult, contentious area, and my right hon. Friend should move with extreme care.

There are many other matters that could be covered, but what comes through from this debate, and what I am trying to say, is that we have the chance in this Parliament to improve the conditions of all people. In many ways we are pointing in the right direction. However, I urge my right hon. Friends to get on with the things that will really help. They should not get trapped into pursuing some other things that will be of only marginal, if any, advantage and will serve only to promote discord rather than harmony.

6.56 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I represent, with great pride, the constituency of Newport, West. Newport, West is a constituency that was formed in 1983 and its first Member was Mr. Mark Robinson. Mr. Robinson was a diligent, hard-working Member whose talents were swiftly recognised by the Conservative party and he won promotion as a junior Minister at the Welsh Office. Mr. Robinson's work within the constituency won him the respect and affection of its people.

The decision of the people of Newport, West to reject Mr. Robinson was in no way a reflection on his gifts, energies or work. The right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) referred to "a knock-out" on certain issues, but in Newport, West the Conservative party was the victim of a walkover. In local government elections, the people of Newport, West regularly gave the Labour party 60 per cent. of the vote for council members. In the last

election, there was a swing of nearly 11 per cent. to Labour. That swing represented a judgment on the work of the local authority.

Today and in the previous debates we have heard an ugly caricature of the work of Labour local authorities—indeed, all local authorities. The right hon. Member for Aylesbury said with some truth that there will be great resentment of the gratuitous insults contained in the Government's intentions. Those intentions will be deeply resented by local authorities of all political colours. I believe that the attempts to suppress and frustrate the work of good, intelligent local authorities will be deeply resented and all parties will revolt against those attempts.

History contains some dire warnings about Governments who have subjected themselves to the delusion that absolute power means they have an absolute monopoly of wisdom, intelligence and judgment. I commend hon. Members to read once again Gibbon's "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire". They will discover what happened when Rome decided to draw the power to the centre. The effects of that attempt are found in the volumes devoted to the fall of the Roman empire.

The words "sterile" and "negative" have been used to characterise the work of the Labour local authorities. However, I can talk with great pride of the work of Newport borough council. In the interests of brevity I shall confine myself to one area of its work—housing. Of course, that council cannot compete with the rate freeze suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), but rates have been frozen for three years within the borough. The borough's policy on housing has been one of high achievement, sensitive management, inspired innovation and a genuine non-doctrinaire quest for continued improvement.

It may come as a surprise to hon. Members on both sides of the House to learn that an authority that has been Labour for almost every one of the past 50 years has, for nearly 20 years, been selling council houses. Its reasons for doing so are not the Government's reasons. It is not done as an act of social engineering, a self-motivated act designed to win people to its side. It has always been part of the history of the Socialist movement—going back on the continent to the Swedish Socialists, and in this country to the Rochdale pioneers and the early guild Socialists—that home ownership is the cornerstone of Socialism. We have always considered it right for a person to own his home; what we object to is the belief that it is right to own someone else's home.

The reason that we in Newport have sold council houses for all this time is that we have seen the dilemma of housing in its long-term aspect. Too often, it is forgotten, or seen as a temporary, short-term problem. But when we decide on our answers to housing problems, we are looking for solutions that will not merely last for the life of a Parliament or a council, but will stand firm and good for 60 or even 100 years. The decision to sell council houses in Newport was made, and the sales are being continued, to create stable, mixed communities, and because, in these inflationary times, it is not property but rent that is theft.

We have heard the words "sterile" and "negative". Let us look at the achievements in Newport. Every pre-war dwelling in the town has been modernised; every council house has been equipped with central heating; 20 per cent. of stock has been sold to its sitting tenants, and it is all still occupied by the same tenants. There are highly successful

and innovative share ownership schemes to enable the very young to get on to the ladder of home ownership, and stay-put schemes to help the elderly to remain in their communities. All those schemes are up and running. There are more housing action areas in Newport than anywhere else in Wales, and there are brilliantly successful pioneering schemes for the elderly and the disabled. A continuous, successful and unique programme of decentralising power to the estates and the tenants has been introduced.

I could proceed with a long litany of such achievements, but it is a measure of what has happened that those great achievements have been made in the teeth of remorseless antagonism and hostility from the Welsh Office. There has been a 95 per cent. cut in real terms in new money for funding housing since 1979. Apprenticeships have virtually disappeared, and have been replaced by the candy-floss MSC jobs, leading to enormous problems in obtaining skilled building workers. Repeated bureaucratic and frustrating delays by the Welsh Office have left the borough constantly under-funded and under-resourced. To make matters worse, the Government have locked away the money that we legitimately obtained—nearly £28 million—and thrown away the key. We cannot touch it. We cannot use it to create jobs and better housing.

Finally, let me quote the words of a great Member of Parliament for the county of Gwent—Aneurin Bevan—when he was Minister of Housing. He said that his finest ideal—what he hoped above all else to create in the new estates that were being built in the late 1940s—was the reproduction of what he described as the most lovely feature of English and Welsh village life in which the farmworker, the lawyer, the blacksmith and the doctor lived side by side in the same street. He wanted to create the rich tapestry of a mixed community. That is a high ideal that we have rarely achieved.

What do we see in Thatcher's Britain today? Do we see the picture of that tapestry, a balanced picture of harmony and order, or do we see something else? What we see is not a tapestry, but an ugly jigsaw broken by lines of division and injustice. We are seeing the creation of ghettos. On one side are those whose estates are shunned: they are places of fear, crime and neglect. The other, almost equally worrying, piece of the jigsaw shows the privileged estates behind barricades with security fences and guards in front of them.

That is our choice today. Do we take the line—this is what we will vote on tonight—that we will continue to try to create in the long term that happy rich tapestry of a mixed community, or do we carry on as we are and produce again the Thatcherite confusion of our jigsaw estates and our jigsaw society of injustice and unfairness?

7.5 pm

Mr. Timothy Kirkhope (Leeds, North-East): First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me thank you for calling me so early in the debate. I should like to crave the indulgence of the House on this first occasion that I have spoken in the Chamber.

I am particularly honoured to follow as Member of Parliament for Leeds, North-East such a distinguished politician and parliamentarian as the right hon. Sir Keith Joseph. I am sure that it is unnecessary for me to remind the House of his enormous contributions over 31 years to this place, to his constituents, to his party and to the

[Mr. Timothy Kirkhope]

country. He has held many major offices of state, including housing, social services, industry and education, but I shall confine myself now to saying that he has been most kind and thoughtful to me, as his successor, and that I know how highly he is regarded by all those whom he has helped over the years with understanding, warmth and humility.

I am particularly proud to represent Leeds, North-East, being a northerner myself and having been born and educated and having lived in the north all my life. I am proud of being northern, and of representing a northern seat. At the same time, I am fully conscious of the important role played by the northern region in the prosperity of the nation as a whole—in the past, in the present and, I trust, in the future.

I do not think it very helpful to look at the north in a parochial or a narrow way. Such an attitude, in my view, creates greater divisions—divisions that are quite unnecessary in what is a comparatively small country. That kind of negativism has not helped us over the years. We in the north are dynamic, positive, inventive and hardworking. We are a strong and important component of the whole nation and its activities, and we must always remain so.

My constituency is perhaps notable for being very broad in its cross-section of the communities who live within it. The northern end contains the countryside and farmland around Harewood, Shadwell, Wike and the other villages, and goes down through the suburbs of Leeds to Chapeltown in the inner-city area of Leeds. I should like to mention Chapeltown particularly, as it is very relevant to today's debate. Chapeltown is a community made up of all kinds of parts. There are a number of different ethnic-minority communities, and from time to time there are tensions. However, I should like to give credit to the community leaders and others in that part of my constituency who, over the past few years, have co-operated fully with each other. As a result of Government initiatives during the past eight years, they have begun to build a community of great happiness, potential and prosperity.

Leeds as a whole, like the rest of the north, has adapted to changes over the years. My constituency has been very much a part of those changes. Leeds contains a large number of businesses. Members of the business community do not necessarily work in the constituency but they reside there. They have great confidence in the future of the area. They have told me how much they welcome the Government's initiatives, particularly those that relate to the abolition of rating, as we know it, and the new community charge provisions. The effect will be greatly to increase the ability of businesses, particularly in my area, to do well. They will then be able to employ more people, which will create greater prosperity for Leeds and for other great cities.

My constituency contains just over 65,000 electors. All of them have aspirations—some great, some limited—but all those aspirations are important to me, as their representative. It is my duty to help them to achieve their aspirations. When we speak of the powers of local government and national Government, we should be concerned about preserving as many powers as possible for ordinary people. Certain powers must, of course, be delegated to central Government. That has always been

the case, and it will always be so. However, it is important not to assume a divine right to hold too many powers over others, or to deny freedom to individuals to direct their own destinies and those of their families. Such paternalism is open at times to misuse, and in some areas, particularly the poorer areas of our cities, such misuse leads to resentment within the community.

In this context it is worth noting that it is not just a phenomenon of the 1970s and the 1980s that central Government have sought to vary or to reduce local powers. It happened much more radically when the health services were nationalised, when national assistance was taken over by central Government and when the electricity and gas services were taken from local authorities and put under national control. History shows that Governments on their own are particularly unable to create success out of failure, to promote happiness out of misery or to create wealth out of poverty. Only people themselves—free people, with the power of preference and the power of activity—can change things for the better.

I served as a county councillor for some years and saw the developing conflict between local government and central Government. With more goodwill and understanding, we might have avoided some of the extreme results. I saw central Government adding to the legislative burden of local authorities, while at the same time trying to keep expenditure in check. I saw local authorities abusing their position by exercising functions that were not rightly their own and attempting at times to avoid the effects of national policy by circuitous means.

Now is the time to set out precisely the functions that may be undertaken by local authorities so that future misunderstandings may be minimised. Now is the time to ensure that as far as possible central Government do not add to those responsibilities by their own processes. That would at least provide an opportunity for mutual respect between central Government and local government to be restored and maintained.

I support the Government's education proposals. I mentioned earlier the Chapeltown area, which is in my constituency. It is made up of many different interests and groups of people. They are particularly keen that there should be more freedom for parents to choose how their children shall be educated—by what means and in what places. In their education proposals the Government have provided a marvellous opportunity to allow that freedom to be respected.

I believe in freedom for both individuals and families. I believe also in the attendant rights and responsibilities that accompany such freedom. They are the cornerstone of our society, and they are our best guarantee against dictatorship or oppression. That is fully consistent with my Conservative philosophy, and it is the basis upon which I hope to pursue my parliamentary career.

7.14 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): The pleasant task falls to me of following two maiden speakers, both of whom, though from different sides of the Chamber, were equally succinct. The content of their speeches was also quite pleasant.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) quoted Gibbon. I note his past interest in leasehold reform, which is very near and dear to my heart, as it is to the hearts of many other hon. Members who represent

Lancashire constituencies where we have chief rents to worry about. I make that early "plug" now, knowing that I have immediate support from my hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) succeeds a man who had many friends on both sides of the House. Because of the way that he has spoken tonight, I suspect that the hon. Member will also acquire many friends on both sides of the House.

I read the Gracious Speech with great care and noted that it contains proposals relating to copyright and intellectual property. Those who have had time to consider those matters over the years know that reform is much needed. However, when they introduce the legislation we trust that the Government will draft it with care and that they will learn from the experience of other parts of the world where reform, when rushed, often led to disaster.

The subjects for debate tonight are the inner cities and education. I represent not an inner city but a northern industrial town that lies between two major cities. The Minister who has responsibility for these matters but who is not in his place at the moment knows, from his other incarnation, that I am somewhat persistent in furthering the interests of the people of St. Helens. St. Helens is not an inner city but it suffers from the urban deprivation of the inner cities. Other towns like St. Helens ought to be considered. It is very easy to talk about the inner cities but to forget the old industrial towns of the north that have suffered just as much from de-industrialisation, bad housing stock and lack of investment.

St. Helens is boxed in by its motorways. The M62 lies to the south, the A508 to the north, the M6 to the east and the M57 to the west. Therefore, one drives past it. I give the Minister fair warning that when it comes to urban investment he must not dare to drive past St. Helens, otherwise I, for one, will demand to know why St. Helens is being left out of the plans for investment, infrastructure and replacement of housing stock. It is galling to realise that money will be afforded to Liverpool and Manchester, which I welcome. Warrington has its new town. I welcome that, too. However, St. Helens has its rights, and those who represent St. Helens intend to ensure that it succeeds in obtaining its fair share. The people of St. Helens deserve equality of opportunity. In the last Parliament I begged that St. Helens should be given equal development status and equal investment grants, but it did not get them. Because so many jobs in the glass industry have been lost, on this occasion we intend to have our share of the cake.

Education is irretrievably linked with the redevelopment and regeneration of an area. Therefore, Ministers should look most carefully at the education proposals. I dread that we shall return to the days of my boyhood when, as one neared the age of 11, one began to sweat and worry about the examinations that would separate and differentiate one boy or girl from another.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Dunn) indicated dissent.

Mr. Bermingham: The Minister shakes his head, but he always shakes his head in disagreement when I touch on a raw nerve.

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): That is because the hon. Gentleman is usually wrong.

Mr. Bermingham: The right hon. Gentleman has accused me of usually being wrong. I have inevitably been proved right, particularly when I have criticised the Secretary of State, among others.

I listened to what was said during the election campaign. It seems that there is to be some form of selectivity. Schools that opt out may be able to choose the type of pupils that they want. I wonder what the criteria will be. "Do you come from the right side of the street? Do you come from the right part of town? Do you have the ability to supply your own books and to pay for your own school trip?" I remember teaching many years ago in a primary school in Rotherham. Those who know south Yorkshire will know just how rough the back end of Rotherham was 10 or 20 years ago. I remember the children who were deprived. Eventually inevitably they lacked opportunity. I do not want to see selectivity back in our education system.

Would it not be nice if the Secretary of State recognised that there is a link between education and achievement and that there is a link between a future and an investment in youth? Would it not be nice if we began by providing proper nursery schools, adequately staffed and supported primary schools, and, subsequently, secondary schools in which one does not have to rely on parents to buy books, as one does in Derbyshire, or to provide all the extras, for the state actually has an input? If we recognise that by investing in children we create the intellectual assets of tomorrow, perhaps we shall realise that education, further education, advanced education and university training are great investments in our society.

If the Government come forth with investment in education and the inner cities—remembering, of course, places such as St. Helens—I shall cheerfully withdraw all of the criticisms that I have made, and I shall do so humbly and openly. I fear that I shall not make that apology. We shall have to wait for the electorate to give us the chance to put right the wrongs within our society.

7.21 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): The House has heard two excellent maiden speeches, one from the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and the other by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope). In some ways, I am making a second maiden speech. It is 12½ years since I spoke from the Back Benches. One finds a type of later adolescence, for one who has enjoyed office, to return, in metaphorical terms, to the crystal waters of belief—the driving forces that brought us here—and again return to the main principles.

I am particularly interested in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's ideas about schools opting out. Throughout the 19th century, although it was the century of classical liberalism, it was a matter of opting in. That century began out of personal efforts and small areas and moved towards more power for local government and national government and, funnily enough, to more centralisation. Some hon. Members have talked about Socialism. I have always considered that the Benthamites were almost the beginning of what followed 20 or 30 years ago when we said that we were all Socialists. The past 10 or 20 years of this century are the years of contracting out—of opting out. The tide of movement against more collective control has come. Throughout the developed world, we are moving towards more individualism and more personal choice in every way.

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

I welcome the passage in the Gracious Speech that states:

"My Government will take action to raise standards throughout education and to extend parental choice."

I believe in consumer control of education and health, as the Government also believe in it in the economic field and in denationalisation. I believe that parents should be sovereign. The child — the scholar — belongs to the parent. The parent is the only one who is totally and solely concerned for the child. I respect the education experts, although they usually are experts in other people's children. But I would sooner have the commitment and concern of parents. Similarly, I respect the expertise of teachers and head teachers, but they are still concerned for the school and the standard of the school, and the only person who is ultimately concerned for the child is the parent. A child's education is the biggest responsibility of a parent's life. Any extension of parental choice is good. Indeed, neither parents nor pupils brought about the disasters that have occurred in education over the past 25 years — the discovery method in primary schools, non-selection gone mad, and non-orientation in secondary schools. They were brought in by experts, advisers, even Her Majesty's inspectorate, and a body of political interference. The parents were certainly not involved in any decline.

I am a believer in the direct funding of schools. I would settle for direct funding of schools in opting out. However, I have one proviso. The decision should be made in the school, not by governors or teachers, but by consumers — parents — by secret ballot and, if necessary, in a secondary school, by parents and the senior forms in the primary schools from which new pupils are to be found. The children are involved in every way.

On the matter of opting out, I shall ask the Secretary of State three questions. First, what is the position of voluntary schools? If they opt out by agreement, are they still responsible for 15 per cent. of capital costs? That would strike me as unfair. Secondly, in areas in which parents want a school because they are dissatisfied with the present schools, how do they opt in to national funding? In my constituency, a group of about 200 Moslems want a Moslem school. I support Jewish schools, Catholic schools and other Church schools. I support the right of Moslems, as long as they follow a basic curriculum, to have their own school. Can they go to the Secretary of State, as I hope they can, and say that they want to opt into this method of direct national funding because no school in the area satisfies them? Indeed, it could be in Brent. All of us have read the reality regarding Brent. Hundreds, if not thousands, of parents in Brent soon will not want any of the schools in Brent because of Left-wing intervention and the way in which schools are run. Is there a chance for them to say that they want their own school because none of the present schools satisfies them?

Thirdly, what about independent schools that have recently been founded? Some such schools cost less than those in the state system. There is one in Northampton, and others in other areas. Can the great independent schools which work for the education of our children say that they too want to be fee-free? Can they return to the basic organisation of educating poor children that started them in the first place?

I welcome the national curriculum. I have read the pamphlet written by my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison). I regret that a word was not put in before "curriculum", and that word is "minimum". I am concerned about a minimum curriculum by achievement, which all those with an IQ of 70, well-taught and attending well, can achieve at 7, 11 and 14. Beyond that, the teacher should be free. I should not like any textbook specifications. It must be the minimum standard. What happens if, at 7, 11 or 14, a child does not pass? He cannot wait for an inquiry to see why he has not passed. In certain parts of America, one may have a re-course in the summer and take the examination at the end of it, as some of us at university did from time to time. In Germany, one goes back a year. With a minimum curriculum, what will happen to those who do not pass? If they do not pass, it will mean that they are handicapped for life unless they are brought up to the required standard.

I have taken from the Library a book which I have not seen for years, and that is the "Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers". We used to have a minimum curriculum. It was guided by the "Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers". When, in 1950, I met my first secondary modern school class, I was given a copy. Indeed, when Her Majesty's inspectors visited the school, they asked me whether I had a copy. Although they were satisfied by the teaching, they were interested to know whether I had a copy of that book which offered guidance and not over-specification. It was last published in 1946 and states that the board — at that time we had just moved out of the system of the Board of Education —

"hope . . . that the present volume will be regarded as a necessary part of the equipment of every teacher in a Public Elementary School. It remains for the teachers themselves to apply and to adapt the standards of practice suggested in the volume in the particular circumstances of the schools in which they are at work."

By all means let us have a minimum curriculum but let us also have maximum freedom for teachers to go beyond it and to teach from the textbooks and syllabuses that they want so long as they cover the minimum curriculum.

Opposition Members have referred to selection in education. Yes, there is now selection because a comprehensive school is a neighbourhood school. One can buy one's child a place in it by buying a house in the area. If Opposition Members think that that is an advantage, they must have funny ideas about education. Estate agents refer to houses being in certain catchment areas and advertisements to that effect can be seen in newspapers. All that the Labour party did was ensure that those comprehensive schools that are basically grammar schools, but with a CSE stream, are available to the rich. However, the comprehensive schools in the inner cities tend to be of a lower standard, and are often secondary modern schools, with only a few pupils taking GCEs. I find it astonishing that there can be any praise for what the Labour party did.

There is always selection. Indeed, we are all here as a result of selection. We are not, for example, the first 50 names in a telephone directory, about which Bill Buckley talks. We have come here by a highly selective method. One can watch Wimbledon. Children in Czechoslovakia start to learn tennis at the age of five or seven and that is why competition is so intense from those people. Selection is everywhere, but the issue is the type of selection that we are offered. Opposition Members have referred to a rich tapestry and that is what I should like to see in schools.

I should like to see schools of different types, commercial, science; language, craft, technical, mathematical and dancing schools — all of which must conform to a minimum curriculum, but all of which could offer two extra hours' tuition in their special subjects in the evening. In that way, we could compete with Germany and Japan. Selection must come back in some form, and it must include individual self-selection.

Individual men and women differ in every way—for example, in their height, the speed at which they grow, the age at which they go bald, in their sense of humour and in the side of the Chamber on which they choose to sit. Anyone who believes that the one thing in which individuals are equal is a mark I brain which is the same in everybody's head makes the flat earthers seem the most rational of men.

On local government, I am in favour of the community charge. Despite its disadvantages, I believe that it will have great advantages over the present system and over any alternative method. I agree with the concept of a universal business rate and with the privatisation of local services. Political contracts should not be imposed by local authorities. I agree with contracting out of the Inner London education authority. However, I advise my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that if it is right for Westminster, Kensington and Wandsworth to contract out of ILEA because they do not like the way in which it is run, some parts of other London boroughs, which are Socialist-controlled, might like to contract out also. Wembley, for example, might like to contract out of Brent, Chingford out of Waltham Forest — where I was a councillor for seven years — and Hornsey out of Haringey. Indeed, one could find examples throughout London. If that principle is established—and it is such a good thing that we need more of it—we should extend it.

I shall return regularly to this topic because I am on record as saying that the local government reforms of 1964 and 1972 were a disaster for this country. They destroyed familiarity with areas. They occurred when hon. Members from all parties worshipped size and conglomerates in industry. Tower blocks were built, as were large comprehensive schools. However, the tower blocks are now being knocked down. Schools are now smaller and businesses are breaking up into smaller parts. Why can we not do the same in local government? It should not be done through Westminster and Whitehall. Individual areas should be able to say that, because they are of a certain size and population, they can manage and, therefore, want to be on their own. They should be allowed to operate as parts of the great free society of the Conservative Government.

I welcome the fact that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench are taking much of education away from the local education authorities by the system of opting out. They are doing the same with housing also. If that is the case, there could be smaller authorities and we could return to local authorities that are responsible for small libraries, street paving and other matters relevant to local government. In that case, local government could be run by volunteer councillors attending two nights per week and one day per month, receiving only their expenses and being reimbursed for their loss of earnings. Local

government would then not be run, as it is now, by the poly-Trots who are employed full time, together with their political hangers-on, to run the Socialist boroughs. In that way we could return to real local government.

There is no time to waste in London. I am sorry that there are not more hon. Members present who represent London constituencies. However, I shall make sure that they know what I have said this evening because I shall need their support at some stage. It is always well to get in early. The community charge will help to bring back discipline and people will know that they are paying for what they voted for. The people are the source of authority and that is part of self-help. I am surprised that the community charge has not been met with great cheers from Opposition Members. All that is required is enlightenment and it is only a matter of time before Opposition Members say that the community charge is the best thing since sliced bread.

The community charge will not come into effect until 1990 which is when the next local elections will be held in London. There will not be time for it to have been effective in 1990, and the next election in London after 1990 will be in 1994. Are we to have eight years of Socialist spending in London, in areas such as Waltham Forest, Hammersmith and Fulham and Brent?

We want rate capping because otherwise the Socialist desert of the inner city, about which we are all concerned, will extend to the suburbs. There are three renowned geographers present in the Chamber, as all hon. Members will be aware. I shall not name them now as I must not delay myself and the House. Those hon. Members who are geographers will know that a desert will expand unless the vegetation on its fringes is protected. The fringes of London are the Camdens, the Brents, the Waltham Forests and other such areas. Unless those areas are protected by rate capping, the inner city, its Socialist problems and the deprivation that I sometimes think is built in for political voting purposes will extend to the suburbs. Although we may solve the problems of the inner city, its problems will spread to the suburbs. Therefore, there should be rate capping so that any authority that spends more than its grant-related expenditure should not be allowed to increase its expenditure this year by more than the rate of inflation. That should apply throughout London because, if it does not, the problem of the Socialist desert will spread.

I hope that I am allowed to return to that matter at some time in more detail. However, I conclude on a tone of harmony. *[Interruption.]* I welcome the fact that Opposition Members are concerned. Indeed, that is a great gesture from them. I turned up one of Matthew Arnold's narrative poems in the Library earlier this week, in which he wrote:

"Hath man no second life? Pitch this one high."

Tonight, I have begun my second political life.

7.38 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): It is perhaps apposite that this debate is on the cities because I believe that it is the custom in a maiden speech to make references to one's own or adopted city. Bradfordians are proud of their city and its traditions of craft, skill and hard work. We are proud of our heritage which includes Forster, Delius, Margaret McMillan, J. B. Priestley and many more. We are proud of much of our modern city, if not of all of its new redevelopments. We are proud of the national

[Mr. Pat Wall]

photographic museum, our refurbished St. George's hall, the Alhambra theatre and, in the light of tomorrow's debate, of our flourishing tourist trade. However, as the country's fifth largest conurbation, Bradford shows and mirrors exactly the problems of so many of the cities in this land.

Last Friday I accompanied a delegation concerned with further development of a historic and interesting part of our city known as Little Germany. It is known as Little Germany because of the refugees who came there, settled and expanded part of our textile trade. As many waves of immigrants have done in the city of Bradford, they added to our heritage and culture.

On that visit, I should have been accompanied by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), but at the last minute he declined to come. That lost him some support among his friends in the city, as his political allies lost votes in the general election in the city of Bradford. But I do not blame the right hon. Gentleman. He was faced with the prospect of accompanying three Labour Members of Parliament, who had not only won three seats and increased their votes, but had other distinctions—a hat-trick in the 101 Damns, two goals in the Terrible 30 and even a semi-finalist in Rupert Murdoch's Eve of Poll Fearsome Four. Therefore, I am not surprised that the right hon. Gentleman was not interested in sponsoring our Bradford league.

However, had the right hon. Gentleman or, more importantly, any of the Ministers responsible for inner cities, urban renewal or trade and industry walked along the Leeds road for a mile and a half at most, out of the Little Germany district in the centre of Bradford, he would have seen Crofts engineering largely demolished, the Metro bus workshop closed after deregulation, GEC closed and replaced by a supermarket—three factories that employed 7,000 Bradford workers now employing 125.

When I arrived in Bradford some 18 years ago, it was at the time of the building of the M62, which was finished within two years of my moving to the city. It was to link the Atlantic sea port of Liverpool with the European gateway of Hull, before our entry into the Common Market. The motorway was to bring renewed prosperity to the industrial areas of Lancashire, west, north and south Yorkshire. In Bradford we had real hopes 18 years ago—and 16, 15 or even 10 years ago. We hoped that the motorway would result in the development of industry, with engineering brought into the town to replace the declining wool industry. Our children were promised a future with an expanding university and colleges, and jobs that were cleaner, more technical and more interesting than the jobs that their parents and grandparents had. That promise was held out to the people of Bradford.

What must be understood about the cities is the terrible desolation and breaking of people's hopes and aspirations over recent years. At that time we were in the "white heat of the technological revolution", as Harold Wilson called it.

Even some of those of us who doubted the ability of the declining British capitalist economic system to solve the problems and improve the lifestyles of our people could not have foretold how quickly those promises would turn to ashes. The M62, the trans-Pennine highway, runs from redundant Liverpool, through de-industrialised

Lancashire and west Yorkshire. It bisects north and south Yorkshire, with the closed steel mills and the empty pit villages of two eras of MacGregor. It ends in the port of unemployed Hull, where today there are not even any fishing boats. Our university has faced 30 per cent. cuts under the Conservative Government. Our smaller colleges are closed or closing. The vast majority of the students of the largest college in Bradford are on YTS or have become part of other groups of unemployed young people. Bradford is not producing the scientists, technicians and designers that we were promised when the M62 was built.

From 1978 to 1984, jobs in manufacturing, energy and construction fell by 30,700, a fall of 35 per cent. In the same period, most of the jobs created were in the service sector and in supermarkets. We attracted only 6,600 jobs, and 84 per cent. of them were for part-timers.

The Prime Minister talks of abolishing Socialism and of her popular people's capitalism. Over generations, capitalism has done little for the mass of Bradford people. Old-style capitalism in Bradford was the mills. It is true that they brought some fine civic architecture to our town. The mills' confidence meant that the banks were built like cathedrals. On the wool exchange, people boasted that there were more Rolls-Royces per head than in the London stock exchange. But those mills were built on the backs of tens of thousands of workers in squalid back-to-back housing, and for eight-year-old children working part-time in the mills, while the mill owners lived in luxury.

Post-war capitalism in Bradford was in engineering. However, two thirds of engineering has already left Bradford. Apparently modern progressive people's capitalism is jobs in supermarkets. Somebody in Bradford said as a joke that, taken to its logical conclusion, that means that we shall end up selling each other packets of sausages and tins of paint, nobody will make anything in Britain, and all manufactured goods will be imported.

The reason why the general election was called 12 months early had nothing to do with opinion polls or with the division between the two alliance parties on defence. I believe that it was called because the more serious Conservative Members realised that we are on the verge of the third major recession in the post-war period. Nothing in the Government's programme offers anything to the people of Bradford. It is not the hiving-off of some of our better schools in the better-off areas to be the private privileged bastions for sections of the upper middle class that we need in Bradford; it is the rebuilding of the one third of our schools that were built before 1904. It is not the hiving-off of our housing estates to private landlords and developers that we need; we need payment to help with the backlog amounting to £130 million, to refurbish housing in our city. That sum represents the amount that we would get in 10 years from the housing investment programme.

We are on the eve of a further recession. All the signs show a slowing down in the economies of Germany, America, Japan and all the major western powers. Britain is incapable of dealing with the growing trade war on a world scale, because of the underinvestment, under-research and underdevelopment of our industry, and our undertrained work force. Britain is incapable of facing such competition.

I say, sadly, that no one in the Opposition likes poverty, indignity, squalid housing or slum schools. We stand for the elimination of those things, not their increase. I have to tell the good people of East Anglia and the Thames

Valley, the majority of whom voted for the Conservative party in the past two general elections, that a further crisis in Britain will hit the south more than the rest of the country. It will hit the service and financial sectors. The good people of those areas may find that their dreams will turn to ashes tomorrow, like the dreams of Bradford, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and other workers over the past 10 years. I should like to return to that subject in debates in the House to a greater extent in future because that is the platform on which the debate between both sides of the House must be conducted.

I believe that we shall not see the death and abolition of Socialism. The people in the south-east and the more prosperous areas will learn, like those in Bradford. We are proud of our heritage, that the Independent Labour Party was founded in our city, and that Keir Hardie fought a famous by-election in my constituency. People will realise that Socialism is more relevant than ever, and that it is only the collective action of people, the use of public ownership and public finance in our cities that can establish a platform of decency on which individuals can flourish and develop.

I can honestly claim that the Conservative party, in attempting to prevent me from speaking in this House, spent more money during the last two elections than has ever been spent against any candidate. We estimate that at least £250,000 was spent on newspaper advertisements, and many people think that the figure was even higher. I humbly suggest to Conservative Members that that was a poor investment. I suggest that in future, instead of those ludicrous advertisements and quotations, they confine the debates in this House and future elections to the issues. I cannot promise them that they will get better results in Bradford, but at least they will be much cheaper.

7.51 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I am delighted to be here representing the constituency of Billericay. First, I want to pay tribute to my predecessor, Harvey Proctor, who was a most conscientious, and hard-working Member of Parliament for the constituency and greatly respected by the people for whom he assiduously worked. I know that he had many friends in this House, who greatly admired his work to provide better protection for people who had mental problems. He will be greatly missed in the constituency. I have a tremendous example of hard work to follow.

Billericay is close to London—about an hour to the east, in the green belt. One might wonder why the green belt should be concerned about the inner city. A number of speakers have made the point that the green belt is to some extent threatened by the problems of the inner cities. The constituency has many delightful villages and open spaces, but the pressure to develop those spaces because of the needs of people who want to escape from the suburbs in the east of London—suburbs that are controlled by Socialist councils which have developed the most horrible living conditions for people in those areas—is of great concern to the people whose interests I represent.

Billericay is a delightful microcosm of the type of prosperity that the policies followed by the Government have introduced to the country. It is successful; it is an area in which jobs are chasing people; and it enjoys the type of people's capitalism that we are extending to all parts of this country. The hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr.

Wall), who painted such a gloomy picture of his part of the world, should cheer up, because we intend to continue those policies, which will, I am sure, reach Bradford, North before the next election. I am sure that the people who voted for the hon. Gentleman will carefully consider whether the Socialism that is largely responsible for the destruction of the industries in Bradford, North, and elsewhere is something that this country can really afford.

The people of Billericay are concerned about the pressure to develop in the green belt. Their young people often have difficulty in finding somewhere to live because the price of property, the result of that pressure, has gone through the roof. Many of the areas are as expensive, when it comes to buying property, as those in central London. Those young people travel up and down each day on the Liverpool street and Fenchurch street lines, which are grossly overcrowded and rather mismanaged by our nationalised British Rail—I hope that we shall get round to privatising it with a view to improving services. They travel to work, leaving home between 6.30 and 7 am to come to London—as I know from canvassing—and come home at 6 pm looking grey and tired. They would be happy to live in London near their work if they could find somewhere to live. However, in many parts of the city there are large areas in which young people can no longer find housing. That is largely because of legislation, much of which was misguidedly developed in this House.

I know, because I was a city councillor for Westminster, that there are tens of thousands of houses and flats in London that are held out of occupation because of the Rent Acts, which we must reform. Thousands more houses are held out of occupation because of the inefficiency of local government management of property. I say that, not in anger, but in sorrow, as some of those authorities are Conservative, although the majority are Labour. Local authorities are inherently inefficient at managing property. They have no real motivation to put it back into circulation quickly, so it stands idle, boarded up and useless. In order to get that property back into circulation, we must wrest control of those council estates from the authorities. I welcome the policies that were set out in the Queen's Speech by my right hon. and hon. Friends to do something to reform the management and ownership of the property that is now controlled by city councils.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) said earlier that he was a little concerned about schemes to make the tenants of such estates co-owners, but I want to draw the House's attention to an example from what is, perhaps, an unusual source—Castro's Cuba. There, having nationalised all the property, Castro found himself in such a mess that he was unable to fund them, so he converted the rents that were paid by people into mortgages. This simple measure made the people home owners overnight. For a Communist society, that must have been an enormous innovation—a jolly good capitalist measure. I recommend it, to spread ownership more widely in our cities. It does not have to be difficult to make those estates privately owned and run organisations.

Vast acres in the centre of London are held out of occupation by local authorities who were hoping and praying—deludedly, as it turns out—for a Labour Government to return and allow them back into the housing development business. I am sure that that will not happen. I hope that the Government will consider the possibility of making local authorities auction off that land

[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]

so that it can be developed by the private sector, and more young people can find homes in the City. The problems of our inner cities have been caused by too much Government and local authority power, intervention and planning. The solution is not to introduce yet more laws to perpetuate that practice. We need more power to be returned to the hands of the people who live in the cities. In doing so, we want to reduce the cost of running those cities.

A point that has been raised several times in the debate is the proposal to change the way of collecting domestic rates. A great deal has been said about the amount of money to be collected.

There are other measures in the Queen's Speech that go hand in hand with the proposal to alter the rating system. They are:

"Measures . . . to promote further competition in the provision of local authorities' services."

I know that those measures are dear to the heart of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. As a member of a council, I know that there is an enormous waste of funds in local authorities. The way that we do things is complicated and expensive. I should like to relate a story about a hole in the road. When I was a city councillor we had to have a hole dug in a road, the sort of thing that has to be done in every street from time to time. On this occasion I took particular interest because it was the street in which I live. I found that it was to cost us £1,200 to have this hole dug and refilled but by going round private builders and asking for a better price I found that we could do the same job for £400, one third of the original cost. That is a measure of the economy that we can make when we introduce new measures for competitive tendering.

I would like to see all local government services put out to tender, not just the dustbins but the core services as well. One of the most heartwarming remarks I have heard from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is that he would like local authorities to meet once a year to award tenders, then pack up and go home. When we achieve that level of local government we will have solved the whole problem of the rates. We shall be saving such enormous sums of money that we need no longer worry about how that money is collected.

The solution to the inner city problem is not the hair of the dog — more planning and more interventionist measures. The solution is to reduce planning, to introduce control by the people who live in those cities. That should be done not by fake Socialist co-operatives on which the busybodies in the community take over and persuade local authorities to spend even more on their pet schemes but by enfranchising all the people who live in the cities. That can be done by handing over to them the ownership and management of the property they live in. It is the ownership of private property that gives people respect for their surroundings, which makes them keep an eye on the streets to see that they are not becoming dangerous. It encourages them to keep the kids in order and stop vandalism and generally restore to the city the kind of friendly neighbourliness that once existed. It was the planners who moved in and smashed those neighbourhoods and it is the planners, the bureaucrats, the

organisers who want to dominate and inflict their ideas and opinions on people's lives who are the enemies in our society.

I am convinced that the policies proposed in the Queen's Speech and already begun by the Government will enable us to achieve those aims. By doing so, we shall take the pressure off the green belt so that the constituents of Billericay whom I have the honour to represent will be able to sleep quietly in their beds, no longer worried that their part of the countryside is to join the urban sprawl of London. We shall achieve our aims, handing back power to the people, which is what Conservatism is all about.

8.3 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I am sorry that the Secretary of State for the Environment is not in his place. Earlier I listened to his speech and he was surly enough to speak disparagingly about my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) when my hon. Friend was not here. My hon. Friend's constituency already had one of the biggest Labour majorities in Britain and at the last election he increased it by 9,000.

In south Yorkshire there are 17 seats and only one of them is held by a Tory, whose vote went down. That is the reality of life in the great cities of the north. The Conservative party should take note of that because in the process of time there will be a change of Government. I profoundly agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) who said that the election was called a year early for a good reason and that the people who called it knew that a most serious situation was about to develop. The Conservatives could not possibly have got in if they had called the election many months later. Therefore, from their viewpoint they were wise to call it when they did.

I should like to speak about education. Our amendment says that we:

"regret those Government proposals which will disrupt Britain's education service, limit choice, restrict opportunity, threaten standards and lead to greater central control."

I should like to speak about some of those things. The Government have unleashed an all-out attack on our education system, a system that has taken well over 100 years to develop, and they will destroy it as they have destroyed so many things.

I should like all Conservative Members to come to see the great area of east Sheffield lying still and quiet. In the centre there was a large Tory poster on which with unconscious ironic humour was written,

"The fastest growing economy in the world."

We raised the matter with the television companies, but the demolition agents were there when we went to have a look at the site where the poster had been. The convener of shop stewards went into the office that he had left on having been made redundant. A man sitting there said that he was in charge of the demolition team who were knocking down the factory. That is the kind of thing imposed on us by the Tories.

The Government are now about to fire a broadside at education, launch a full-frontal attack on the whole of our education system. They have imposed a settlement against the will of the teachers and in time that will be dealt with. The Government are anti-union and certainly anti the teacher unions. They are attacking comprehensive education because they know that it is the focal point of

our education system. They have imposed on us the so-called assisted places scheme under which they will cream off a section of the community. They have the nerve to take public finance in order to do that—money for the education of our children and which we have paid by way of rates and taxes. They are appropriating that for themselves and for their children. They have initiated a drive towards centralisation, the like of which we have never witnessed, and have launched an unprecedented attack on local democracy.

Complete confusion prevails about how the Government will carry out their disruptive plans. They are so utterly confused that they have no idea about how they will put those plans into effect. The Government will cause chaos and find themselves in great difficulty. I spoke briefly to the Secretary of State for Education and Science in the corridor and he was kind enough to welcome me back. God preserve us. I said to him, "It is not a revolution in education that you are engaging in; it is a counter-revolution and it will not work." The Government will learn that as surely as I am here.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science had the effrontery to bring out some curious work called "GREB"—I am not sure how it is pronounced—and he calls it the great reform education Bill. I have never seen anything like it. It is an all-out onslaught on education and should be called the great anti-state education and disruption Bill. That will be discovered by many people who do not suspect what is happening and, as I have said, chaos will prevail. So fundamental are the provisions of the Bill that it will need draconian methods to put it into effect.

Some of us can remember when the Prime Minister gave that press conference that morning. She was in a most unholy mess as the proposals had not been thought through. She did not know what she was saying. I listened to the various news reports that day and in every subsequent statement made by other Ministers they tried to undo the damage that the Prime Minister had done by sowing such confusion because she did not even understand her brief about education. No wonder that she panicked a week before when she thought that we were going to win the election. As a result, we have not seen much of a Minister whom she apparently had a row with, and who may not be a Minister much longer.

The Government's policies mean that there will be selection. The National Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations, which represents 4 million parents, called the opting-out process "a divisive mechanism". We did not call it that. No matter what the Government say, there will be selection. Children undergo a process of continuous assessment at school. It has existed for years. Now we have the mentality that Friday morning is test morning. Children will be tested at 7, 14 and so on, which is a waste of time when they are assessed all day every day by their teachers. The fewer students that teachers have, the better they can assess them.

Whitehall, instead of the democratically elected local education authorities which are so near the people, will reign. The Tory party at one time used to call itself the party of local democracy. It is now the party of anti-local democracy. It no longer believes in local people having any say in anything. The local comprehensive will become the local selective if we allow the Government to have their way. The Prime Minister said:

"We are not excluding the possibility that they may also raise additional sums".

The Government are raising additional sums in the posh areas. I visited those areas as a member of a Select Committee. In the south the parents already contribute three times the capitation allowance. What do the parents contribute for education in Sheffield, Bradford and those great cities? Does anyone think that they have money to give for education? Government Members are filching money that we have contributed through rates and taxes to use for their children.

State education is now in the hands of people who have never believed in state education. They do not send their children to state schools, and they never attended such schools. Those people now presume to lecture us on state education notwithstanding the struggles we have waged on it. Our children are in the hands of people who have a flag day mentality. They are siphoning off our cash, as well as the loot from their shares and so on, for their children's education. It means the return of the secondary modern through a creaming off process under the guise of freedom of parental choice. Who do they think they are talking to about freedom of parental choice? That is the reality. More than anything else it means the total destruction of the successful system of comprehensive education. It has been so successful that the Tories have hated it almost from the beginning. They know that every HMI report increasingly vindicates state education.

I ask the Minister why the Government sat on the report of the HMIs until after the election. It is hard for the Minister to have to hear these things. He would like us to talk nicely and politely about the ravages that are occurring to our education system. They know that exam results are better than they have ever been and that more and more of our young people qualify to go to universities, polytechnics and colleges. They also know that education, like the Health Service, is expensive. They are determined to smash comprehensive education at all costs. They will run the risk of destabilising a successful system of education for their own class prejudices.

Ever since the 11-plus exam was abandoned by all civilised LEAs, the Tories have attacked the education system with their black papers and disguised freedom associations and so on. However, they will lose out because they have blundered with this so-called plan. They have enlisted *The Sun*, the *News of the World*, the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Murdochs* to attack us. The reality is that they are their papers. They have the entire panoply of the gutter press at their disposal in every attack on our education system. They are now desperate because they know that even their voters prefer comprehensive education to private education.

They could go to private schools because they had the money. They thought of vouchers, but they would not work. They intend to fund the so-called CTCs with private money and a new creaming-off process. They have tried to smash the teachers unions. We cannot educate our children without a well looked after union of teachers. They thought up the expensive assisted places scheme for creaming-off. They imposed a GCSE before proper preparations were made. That was denounced by the National Confederation of Parent-Teacher Associations, which said that:

"We found that schools are short of teachers, ancillary staff and cash, and that basic training and teaching material deliveries have been completed in only 3 per cent. of secondary schools."

[Mr. Martin Flannery]

The parent-teachers association said that, not me. Those associations asked for a lengthy period of calm and consolidation. What hope do they have with those so-called plans? There will now be a long, wearying and totally unnecessary attack by the Tory party on our education system. It is to be unleashed on us by this most dogmatic and doctrinaire of all British Governments. It will be superimposed on all the disruption and destabilisation of our education system that they have caused by holding back teachers' wages when they could have offered increases two or three years ago. That is a reality that they must know. We shall fight tooth and nail to defend our education system. I prophesy that we shall win when chaos intervenes, as it undoubtedly will.

8.16 pm

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): We have listened to the usual speech delivered in the usual way and for the usual time by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). I do not intend to waste any of my time on replying to the observations that he made. However, I would like to refer to two interesting speeches which were made by my hon. Friends. The first was by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), who made what I can only describe as a Boysonic speech. I look forward to hearing many more such speeches.

The other that I thought particularly noteworthy was from my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). She spoke exceedingly well. She is obviously knowledgeable in the subjects that she referred to—local government, the green belt and the need for more competition to be introduced into local government. She spoke with authority and I look forward to hearing her speak again in the Chamber.

There was an interesting contrast of styles between those speeches, but they were linked by the fact that each speaker knew precisely what they were speaking about, which is in marked contrast to the speech that we have just sat through.

I would like to concentrate on education. The proposals on education that have been outlined in the Gracious Address are worth while and will do a great deal to improve the quality and standard of state education. I would refer specifically to the national curriculum, the introduction of grant-maintained schools and the provision of greater responsibility to schools, head teachers and governing bodies and parents.

The national curriculum will ensure that all pupils at state schools will benefit from a core of common subjects that will include maths, English, foreign languages, science and technology. This is no revolutionary concept. It is already common practice in many countries, certainly throughout Europe and elsewhere. The idea of having attainment targets at 7, 11 and 14 will ensure that parents and teachers will know what standards children should be, and are, achieving. For the first time in the United Kingdom we will have a clear national standard against which parents, teachers and employers will be able accurately to judge the performance of individual children. The three separate benchmarks of attainment will help to ensure that each child reaches a good standard of education. If a child begins to slip behind, that slippage will be identified and remedied.

The fact that 40 per cent. of children under-achieve has been a source of great concern both in the House and outside for some time, and the attainment targets will do much to ensure that the numbers of under-achieving children will be reduced. I welcome the basic core of studies, but hope that there will be some flexibility, because although science and technology are of genuine and real importance, I would not like children who are gifted—for example, in art—to be denied the opportunity to pursue their talent simply because of an artificially restricted syllabus. I understand that music, art and physical education will all continue to be taught and studied and that there is no intention to force children into an educational straitjacket. They will not be art-deprived.

But the national curriculum should ensure that school time—teachers' and pupils' time—is concentrated on what are increasingly seen as the more important subjects and to the detriment of more peripheral studies. A greater concentration on those subjects will benefit children when they leave school because they will be able to use them in their adult working lives.

The establishment of a national curriculum should not stop teachers exercising their professional imagination and responding to challenges. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North also made that point. The national curriculum should reflect the needs of an industrial-based society and the recognition that, in an increasingly technological world, our young people must be trained in the subjects that they will use in the outside world.

My second point relates to the establishment of grant-maintained schools. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North said, the quality of state education in some education authorities is so poor that an increasing number of parents are voting with their wallets and their feet and are moving outside those LEA areas.

Mr. Flannery: Rubbish.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman says, "Rubbish", but the facts are clearly there. Some parents are so worried about their children's education that they will sell their homes and move from the catchment area of one school into the catchment area of a school that is seen to be better. Parents who can afford it will exercise their freedom of choice and will buy independent education for their children. That is a major criticism of the quality and standard of education being provided by many local education authorities.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pawsey: No. Several hon. Members are anxious to make their maiden speeches today, so I shall press on.

In several local education authorities of the type to which I have referred, the core curriculum will improve education, but if heads, parents and governing bodies can opt out of the LEA and accept a direct grant, they will be better able to provide the type of education required by parents, teachers and employers. Additionally, it will introduce a measure of competitiveness which is lacking in education now. That competitiveness will be ignored by the LEA at its peril, for if it is ignored, more schools will decide to opt out of LEA control.

Grant-maintained schools will be of benefit to the remaining grammar schools, especially in those areas where the Labour and Liberal parties still pursue a

vendetta against grammar schools. Only this morning, I heard that the LEA in my area has dropped plans to abolish grammar schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Hear, hear.

Mr. Pawsey: I am delighted to hear my hon. Friend agreeing with that point. He also represents a Warwickshire constituency, and he will be aware that Warwickshire county council has abandoned its plans to abolish grammar schools. My right hon. Friend's policies are beginning to work even before they reach the statute book. The local education authorities understand that grammar schools which are threatened will opt out, and are trying to pre-empt that move by abandoning their own schemes to abolish grammar schools.

Provided that grant-maintained schools can control their own development with adequate funds, funds which will enable them to identify and satisfy their priorities, they will have a bright future. I am convinced that parents will beat a path to their doors, and that will undoubtedly help to lift standards in the remaining LEA schools. Competition is a good spur.

However, I must ask my right hon. Friend one question. Will the ownership of school premises and land be vested in the trustees of schools that opt out of the LEA? Will the school be completely outside the control of the LEA?

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker) indicated assent.

Mr. Pawsey: I see my right hon. Friend nodding, but it would be helpful if he referred to the point when he replies to the debate.

When enacted, this legislation will apply to all secondary schools and to primary schools with more than 300 pupils. Therefore, it will apply to comprehensive schools, but it should not be assumed that if a comprehensive school opts out of the LEA it can automatically become a grammar school or a technical school. I understand that, as now, the Secretary of State's permission would be required before a school could change its essential character.

The proposal will ensure that, within the basic framework of the core curriculum, a school's ethos and character can be protected and strengthened, to the benefit of the children who attend that school. In many education authorities, the hand of the bureaucrat lies heavily on schools, and that is to the disadvantage of teachers, governors, parents and pupils alike.

In our concern about the quality and standard of state education, we should remember that the great debate was started in 1976 by Opposition Members. The answer is not found simply by voting more funds. If that was the solution, education in the United Kingdom would be second to none, for during the past five years expenditure on education in schools has increased in real terms by 10 per cent. per pupil.

My third point relates to the devolution of more responsibility to individual schools, head teachers and governing bodies. That will be widely welcomed, but it is essential to provide the head teacher with the necessary financial and administrative expertise required to run a large secondary school. We can learn a lesson from the independent schools which appoint bursars to take some of the administrative and financial burden from the head

teacher. It would be logical to follow that example in our larger secondary schools. Additionally, head teachers should receive more training in administration and man management than they do now. It should not be assumed that a good teacher automatically becomes a good manager. It would also be helpful for school governing bodies to have a greater range of expertise than they do now.

All that having been said, I am committed to the view that a school which has more control over its budgeting will make better use of funds and resources. The head teacher and his governing body are in a much better position than the bureaucrats at shire hall to know precisely what new equipment or textbooks are required by a class. If repairs to buildings are required, the headmaster and the school governing body will be in a better position than the officials at shire hall to ensure that the repairs are carried out as quickly and as cheaply as possible. I am in favour of devolving more control over budgets to individual schools.

The solutions that have been proposed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State are radical and imaginative. It is a case of serious problems requiring strong measures, and I am delighted that my right hon. Friend is bringing these measures forward. I give him the utmost credit for having fought them through. I am delighted that he recognises the difficulties and problems that exist in state education. I am delighted that my right hon. Friend has not abdicated his responsibility to children or parents and I welcome my right hon. Friend's proposals.

Mr. Flannery: Canonise him.

Mr. Pawsey: That will come later.

However, I have one area of concern. For any educational reform to work, it is clear that we should enjoy the wholehearted co-operation of the teaching profession. Sadly, that is not the case at present, despite the substantial pay award. I am aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is issuing a Green Paper on teachers' pay and conditions. Certainly he needs no urging from me or any other hon. Member to issue that as quickly as possible so that the interim or temporary arrangements can be wound up and replaced by something more permanent.

I very much regret that the teacher unions have not responded to my right hon. Friend's suggestion that they meet him to discuss a more permanent machinery to replace the present interim arrangements. I am aware that my right hon. Friend has done his utmost to persuade teacher unions to discuss those points with him. Even now, I hope that they will do that, not just for the benefit of their members, but for the benefit of the nation's children.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend must forgive me. There are a number of maiden speeches yet to be made and I am anxious to press on.

In conclusion, if we are to improve the quality and standard of state education, the measures outlined in the Gracious Speech must be adopted and I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has the courage and conviction to introduce these considerable and wide-ranging measures.

8.32 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): It is with some trepidation that I make my first real contribution to the proceedings of this House. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to make my first speech so early in the new Parliament.

My constituency of Ynys Môn made history in the early hours of 12 June this year when the constituents elected their first Plaid Cymru Member of Parliament. I am conscious of the great honour and responsibility that they bestowed upon me. I am bound to say that Ynys Môn has usually returned hon. Members who have been in the mainstream of the Welsh radical tradition in politics. Indeed, in the latter part of the 19th century, Anglesey, as the constituency was then known, was represented by Ellis Jones Griffith. During this century it was represented by Lady Megan Lloyd George and Cledwyn Hughes, as he then was. All three hon. Members represented Anglesey for three quarters of a century and were strongly in favour of some measure of home rule for Wales.

I want to pay a particular tribute to one of my predecessors—Cledwyn Hughes, now Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos. For 28 years he was returned regularly to the House and he became the constituency's favourite son. During his long parliamentary career he held high office, particularly as the Secretary of State for Wales and as the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. During his tenure at the Welsh Office, the Welsh Language Act reached the statute book in 1967. That was a significant milestone in the history of the language and we look forward to similar proposals being brought forward by the Government to strengthen the language.

I said that Ynys Môn normally returned hon. Members from a particular tradition. That tradition was broken temporarily in 1979 when my immediate predecessor, Mr. Keith Best, a Conservative, was elected. He was known as an assiduous constituency MP and we were all saddened by the manner in which his parliamentary career came to an end.

Ynys Môn is known affectionately in Wales as "Môn Mam Cymru". For the benefit of the House, may I say that that translates as "the mother of Wales". Following the election result, there was a feeling that the wayward mother had at last returned home and would recount the stories of the past eight years when she was tempted away, but found the charms of home and the deep sense of history too difficult to resist.

The island is known not only for its scenic beauty, but for its sense of pride in its community and its community values. Whether they have been born on the island or have moved there recently to live, the people of Anglesey pull together to protect and nurture their community. However, I warn the House that that community is under threat, principally from unemployment. Holyhead, the biggest town on the island, is an unemployment blackspot with one in four out of work. The town relies heavily on the port of Holyhead for employment and with the recent loss of jobs in the marine workshops and the dry dock unique skills built up over generations have been lost, perhaps for ever.

In Ynys Môn we are also dependent on agriculture and the public sector. We look to the Secretary of State for Wales to defend the interests of our farmers in the negotiations in the European Community, particularly on the sheep market regime, and thus prevent a repeat of the

debacle that we saw over the introduction of milk quotas. We note with alarm the Government's attack on the public sector as outlined in the Queen's Speech particularly on local authorities and the privatisation of the water industry which will be resisted fiercely in all parts of Wales.

During the election campaign the idea of a Welsh senate appealed to more and more people and a number of opinion polls stated that more than 50 per cent. of the electorate favoured the establishment of a Welsh senate. Although that support was not translated into hard votes for Plaid Cymru on this occasion, the House should note that the people of Wales have been alarmed at the collapse in manufacturing industry, cuts in regional aid, the lack of real training opportunities for our young people and the lack of a developed infrastructure in terms of good road, rail, sea and air links. The idea of a Welsh senate is gaining ground because people see the link in all those things and recognise their inability to get things changed.

The proposals set out in the Queen's Speech on education are noted with some alarm, not only on the Opposition Benches, but by many parents, teachers, parent-teachers' associations and school governors. The Government's first tasks must be to restore morale in the classroom and to restore teachers' negotiating rights.

Listening to the Prime Minister address the House on Thursday, I had the distinct feeling that the Government's proposals on education have not been properly thought through. We have a right to know whether parents are to be charged for music lessons, sport trips and other activities. If so, we will oppose that as that opens the door to selection based not on choice, but on parents' ability to pay.

What about the talented musicians and sportsmen of families on small incomes? My brother, if I may say so, is a talented musician and received the full benefit of the free comprehensive state education service. My father, on a minister's stipend, could not have afforded any fees.

In the county of Gwynedd we are very concerned at the opting out proposals contained in the Queen's Speech. In many rural areas, such a scheme would spell disaster. Many of our secondary schools are small and face falling pupil numbers. In addition, we are in the middle of a consultative process on tertiary education. We also have reservations about the introduction of a national—or core—curriculum in Wales. What does national mean in that context? We are against further centralisation as a matter of principle. But on a point of detail, what would happen to bilingual education if a core curriculum were established? Some local education authorities in Wales are concerned that the provision of bilingual education will be hampered by such a scheme. The Secretary of State for Wales should make the Government's position clear at an early date.

My final point adverts to the general comments that I made earlier in my speech. In the period before the election some party political broadcasts, notably and surprisingly by the Labour party, showed a map of Britain with Ynys Môn missing. I was elected to ensure that Ynys Môn was put back on the political map of Wales. I tell hon. Members that from here on they disregard Ynys Môn at their peril.

8.40 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make my maiden speech this evening.

I have the privilege of representing the Beverley constituency, and I have the greater distinction of following Sir Patrick Wall, who is a distinguished public servant and who represented the constituency of Beverley for 33 long, successful and fruitful years. He is held in as high regard by his constituents as he was in this House, as I have gathered since I arrived here. Sir Patrick Wall is a defence expert of international repute. He has held high office in NATO and there is no journey that he would not make to any part of the globe in the defence interests of the United Kingdom. His wise counsel will be missed in this Chamber, as it is already in the corridors of NATO.

I shall spare the House a geographical description of the constituency of Beverley, but it is sufficient to say that, although my constituency abuts the river Humber, few of my constituents recognise what they regard as a modern corruption—the name Humberside. I and most of them—I say this, to my Front-Bench colleagues—want to revert as soon as possible to the more traditional name of the East Riding of Yorkshire.

Most of my constituents work in the Hull conurbation, hence my interest in inner city policy, to which I shall return later in the debate. There is another reason for my interest in this topic. Before being elected to this House I served as the midlands director of the CBI. I became deeply involved in the urban problems of that region and had to work closely with the local authorities that were charged with implementing many of those urban policies. As I talked to local politicians I never doubted where their hearts lay, irrespective of politics. The hearts were always in the right place, but in my view it is heads that solve problems and not hearts.

Sloganising does not help to solve the intractable problem of inner city deprivation. I am thinking particularly of the example of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), who talked last week about the Balkanisation of the inner cities, whatever that means. I caution against listening to rhetoricians or orators, because we need to be level-headed to solve these problems. That is exactly what we are getting from the Government Front Bench. Balkanisation has not been caused, as the hon. Gentleman tried to suggest, by the Government, but by what I regard as myopic local authorities, and it has resulted in matters which all hon. Members would deplore and which I have seen at first hand in places such as Handsworth—I live only a few miles from there—and to a lesser extent in the Hull conurbation. We all deplore the shocking environmental problems of unlettable council houses, decaying private rented housing, little social balance in the communities in which people live, and often with poor schooling. In some people's eyes, the worst problem is that of street crime and vandalism. In the face of all this, any fair-minded individual, be it a politician or anybody else, would recognise the enormous amount that the Government have done to ameliorate these problems, including programmes to alleviate social problems, which is quite right. I hope that the Government will continue along that line and I will support them in it.

It is the lack of economic regeneration that exacerbates social problems. Of that I have no doubt, given that I have operated particularly in the west midlands in the past few years. One of the keys to solving our problems in the inner cities is to encourage enterprise, which is something that we all want to do something about. One of the best means of solving the problem, in contradistinction to what I have

heard earlier in this Chamber in the debate, is urban development corporations. I say that as somebody who has not looked on urban development corporations from afar but as one who, in a small way, helped to lobby for the black country urban development corporation.

We should ignore the local authority lobbying that I have seen for the past year or more, which is hostile to urban development corporations because they see UDCs taking powers away from them. It seems to me that that is irrelevant. It is what does the job best that matters, not who or what does it.

The other matter that UDCs have illustrated is that inner city progress is achieved not by the public sector or the private sector alone but by the two of them working in co-operation. I see that in the conurbations of this country and where it is working best we are seeing the best results.

As someone who has been involved with UDCs, I see four reasons for their success. First, they have an ability to target resources. I often find that local authorities, although they are well-meaning, do not target resources in the manner that some of us would like. Secondly, we should not use the scatter-gun approach to economic development, but concentrate on well defined discrete geographical areas. Thirdly, there is the equally important aspect of the speed of decision-making. The private sector will not wait for ever for local authority committees to come to decisions. Speed of decision-making is of the essence. Fourthly, and perhaps most important of all, is the ability to liberate private sector funds. The private sector cannot do it by itself, the public sector cannot do it by itself, but together there is no doubt that they can do it. That is why we lobbied so hard in the black country for a UDC. Local authorities are bad at delivering such things. They do not mean to be bad, but they are. I therefore respectfully disagree with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) who last week petitioned the Prime Minister to use local authorities as vehicles for economic development. I do not want funds that might go to an urban development corporation to be channelled to Humberside county council, for instance.

I appeal to the Secretary of State not to forget our small cities. Attention is usually grabbed by places such as Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow but there are other conurbations which are not so large but are equally important. Hull should be considered. I hope that the Secretary of State will take my representation seriously and establish a Humberside urban development corporation. I believe that the future of 1 million people in that part of the country depends upon an urban development corporation.

I heard this evening for the first time the details of many UDCs. I need more details. Perhaps that is what we require for the area which I represent.

Many new initiatives were promised in the Queen's Speech. I have no doubt that they will help, but we must improve what is already being done. Many projects need improving. I do not intend to go into detail because I am conscious that others wish to make maiden speeches, but I shall mention one or two possibilities.

I have represented industry and business for over 10 years and I can assure the House that they are at distraction point because of the antics of some local authorities, which increase rates irrespective of the ability of companies or work forces to pay. I strongly support the proposals for rating reform. The sooner they are

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introduced the better. By that route we shall give confidence to British industry and so populate inner cities. The sooner the Government do that the better. Local planning procedures are inhibiting development in the urban areas. Flexibility is the watchword for local planning. In my view, it is lacking.

Property valuation in inner cities is also a problem. Large tracts of derelict land in inner cities are kept according to 1970 valuation sheets. They are not sold because the true valuation is much lower.

The special programmes for inner cities need refining. One Opposition Member earlier criticised the urban programme. I think that it has been immeasurably successful. The urban programme ranges widely over disparate projects, but better targeting of resources is needed.

The derelict land programme has transformed lunar landscapes in some of our inner cities. Again, the Government must market their grants better. More aggression is required by Department of the Environment offices to achieve a better overall performance within regions and nationally. The Government should reappraise derelict land grant to the private sector because it must make a loss to qualify for grant which is, if I might be forgiven, rather Irish.

We should continue to devote more resources to the problem of clearing dereliction. No inward investment will go to an inner city when the investor sees only a lunar landscape.

In conclusion, I thank the House for listening to me with such courtesy to which elsewhere, I confess, I am unaccustomed.

8.57 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): I have the privilege of representing Sunderland, South. I succeed Gordon Bagier to whom I wish a long and happy retirement. Despite my name appearing on every hit list of child eating extremists dreamed up by the Tory party Central Office and their friends in the SDP, Sunderland, South recorded the highest ever Labour vote. I am not foolish enough to believe that that was due to me, but it is hard evidence of the deep division created by the Prime Minister and her friends since they formed the Government. On a night when a Tory majority of over 100 seats was obtained, the Labour party more than doubled its majority in Sunderland, South.

Anyone interested in the effect of the merciless application of market forces should study Sunderland. We have whole streets where almost no one is working. A generation of children is growing up, but those children may never work. At the last count 26,790 adults—26 per cent. of the male population and a substantial part of the female population—were out of work. Half of that 26,790 were less than 35 years of age and 40 per cent. of them had been out of work for two years or more.

At the last count 1,700 school leavers were looking for jobs but there were only 17 vacancies. At the same time 3,438 people were on what are euphemistically called special measures which, when the Prime Minister was in opposition, she liked to call "pretend jobs". Today large parts of Sunderland depend upon cheap labour, known as the community programme. In India I believe that people

who are out of work are forced to sit by the roadside chipping stones for 10 rupees a day. I sometimes wonder whether that is where we are heading.

Sunderland was once the biggest shipbuilding town in the world. That is within the memory of most Sunderland people, but those who are slightly older than me recall when one could not go round the town without hearing the sound of hammers on rivets. Today, there is only silence. In the nine years since the present Government came to power the number of engineering workers in Sunderland has halved.

It is sometimes said that the shipbuilding industry is obsolete, and that what is happening is inevitable. Never. As far as I know, the Gracious Speech contained no proposal that we should stop being an island. As long as we are an island, we shall always need ships, and there is no reason on earth why those ships should not be built here in Britain or why the huge accretion of skills that we have built up over generations should not be put to good use rather than being wasted in the dole queues.

It has sometimes been said that our shipbuilding and engineering workers cannot compete and that they should be competing with workers in South Korea, whose wages are about a third those in British shipyards. Every night on our television screens we see what the South Koreans think of their Government, and I hope that it never comes to that here.

The other day, the Prime Minister referred to the shibboleths of the 1930s. People might be forgiven for thinking that she is dedicated to the shibboleths of the 1830s. Many people in Sunderland are only too well aware of what the 1930s meant and they recognise the symptoms when they see them. A fine lady in my constituency, Mrs. Peggy Weatherstone, recently told me about her childhood in Sunderland in the 1930s. Her mother suffered chronically from asthma and was constantly in fits on the floor. Mrs. Weatherstone had to run down to the telephone box at the end of the street and ring for the doctor. The doctor would ask, "Have you got a pound?" and she would answer "No. We won't have a pound until we get our relief on Friday". The doctor would reply, "Come back on Friday, then." That is how it was, and that is how many people think it may be again.

There is also the experience of a Sunderland shipyard worker, Danny Morgan. He can recall a time, as recently as the mid-1960s, when he would turn up with the others at the gate of the yard and the foreman would say, "We'll have you, you and you, and the rest of you can go home." Those days are coming back, and plenty of people in Sunderland and elsewhere recognise the symptoms.

Last week I was approached by a blind lady in my constituency who has three children. She simply wanted to move from the council house in which she lives to one a little nearer to her mother in another part of my constituency. When I asked a councillor to look into her case the answer came back, "It's not possible because just about all the houses in her street have been sold off." That has happened in the last seven or eight years.

The Prime Minister and her colleagues have been in power for nearly a decade. They have deliberately used mass unemployment as a weapon to degrade and humiliate our people — [HON. MEMBERS: "Come off it."] Hon. Members are not supposed to heckle maiden speeches.

The Government have ruthlessly subverted respected institutions for political ends. The police and the courts have been converted into instruments of the Tory party.

The BBC has virtually been converted into an arm of the state and now the Prime Minister and her Government are proposing an all-out assault on local government which, in Sunderland and elsewhere, is the last line of defence for millions of poor people and their families. The Government propose to hive off the best state schools and let the rest sink.

They propose to bring back the private landlord and to strip the public sector of its best housing—at least, the parts of it which have not already been sold. Finally, they propose a measure which, despite all Conservative Members' denials, will take away the votes of thousands of poor people—the poll tax. People will not dodge paying it just because they want to; it will be a matter of survival rather than of choice.

The Prime Minister and the Government have unleashed a mean streak in our country. They have mobilised the fortunate against the unfortunate. Millions of our people are now held hostage by the greed and myopia of the southern middle classes. My job, and that of my hon. Friends, will be to defend the unfortunate from the tyranny of the fortunate, to try to offer a vision of a society in which people care for each other once again and to try to revive the decent instincts of the British people, so ruthlessly snuffed out by the Government.

Finally, I refer to one other matter with which I have been associated for two or three years now—the cases of the six innocent people convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings and the four innocent people convicted of the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings, all of whom have been in prison for 14 years. I have researched the cases extensively and I am satisfied—I take comfort from the fact that many hon. Members on both sides of the House are satisfied—of the innocence of those people. I believe that many people in high places know that these people are innocent, or at the very least strongly suspect that that is the case. These cases stain our judicial and political system. I know that that view is widely shared on both sides of the House and I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) who has spoken out on this matter. I, and many others, will not rest until justice is done for those people.

9.4 pm

Mr. David L. Shaw (Dover): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for fitting me in before the winding up speeches. I hope at some future date to be able to take some more time on issues affecting my constituency. Tonight, I should like to start by paying homage and thanks to my predecessor, Peter Rees, who has so kindly looked after me in these past seven months and who also looked after the constituency for some 17 years. Peter was well known and, I believe, well liked in the House of Commons. He was also well known and well liked in the constituency. Over the years, I have been to many constituencies, but I am afraid that I cannot say of a great many that the constituency Member commanded such a liking as was commanded by Peter. Peter certainly achieved much, and that was illustrated in the recognition and recommendations from those for whom he worked. I should also like to commend Peter Rees's longstanding work for the port of Dover. On many occasions he took an interest in and lobbied to improve the communications to the port.

I should like to feel that I shall remain the Member for Dover for as long as did the Member at the turn of the

century, George Wyndham, who held the seat for some 24 years. It would also be nice to be returned four times unopposed as he was.

Dover intends to develop greatly the tourist industry within its area. Dover is one of the most beautiful constituencies in the country. It contains three castles. One can see the castle at Dover as one arrives across the English Channel or as one arrives at Dover from the land. It is a beautiful castle and it has defended the nation for some 2,000 years. Indeed, it is reputed that Julius Caesar had to land some miles away because he was thrown off by the castle's defences.

Defence is terribly important to Dover. The Royal Irish Rangers have been stationed in Dover for some three and a half years—their history goes back 300 years. The Royal Marines are stationed in Deal. For many years, previous Members have helped to keep them in the area. We are proud to play our part in the defence of the nation. We are proud that, in the 13th century, Dover was described by Matthew Paris as the "key of England".

There is much within the constituency that is attractive. The countryside is beautiful. Agriculture prospers within the countryside, but there is also other industry, such as coal mining, that is extremely important to the constituency.

The port of Dover is the dominant industry and it employs, directly and indirectly, 10,000 people. It will be for those 10,000 people that I shall express my concern when, later in the course of the session, I hope to be called to speak in the Channel tunnel debate. The port of Dover has successfully expanded during the past few years of the Conservative Government as economic growth has resulted in more passengers going abroad and more freight being exported. The port of Dover looks forward to the next four years of economic growth under this Government.

I should also like to pay tribute to two other companies in the area, Dover Engineering Works and the Avo Electrical Company, not only because they are world beaters, but also because the management had the sense, under this Government, to apply to buy out the companies. They are now mainly owned locally as a result of management buy-outs, and that is what the new capitalism is all about. That is what has given the managements the opportunity to expand their businesses.

Another company within the area is the Buckland paper mill, which makes Conqueror paper of the type that is used in the House of Commons. That company is especially interesting because it has given share options to all of its staff—not just the managers, but also those on the shop floor and the secretaries of the typing pool. They know what wealth creation is about—they have seen and received the benefits of wealth creation.

In the last few moments of my speech I should like to deal with the Gracious Speech and the relevance of wealth creation to that speech. I was somewhat saddened and depressed by some of the comments that were made in earlier speeches. I am sad because wealth creation has been knocked and attacked. The policy of attacking wealth creation does not exist in most other Parliaments of the world today. Even in the Soviet Union, the debate has moved on, and I hope that it will not be long before it moves on in this Parliament as well.

I heard attacks on speculators, but it seems to me that the only speculators in stocks and shares who deserve to be attacked nowadays are councils like the 20 Labour

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councils that invested in the *News on Sunday*. That was one of the fastest bankruptcies that the country has ever seen. Ratepayers' money was lost, and when trade unions invested in the paper their members' money was lost, too.

When I was a councillor, I and my colleagues knew that the only way that we could control expenditure was by common sense, because we knew that the expenditure control systems were inadequate. Both Labour and Conservative Governments had tried to control local authority expenditure, but it had not proved possible in the 1970s or the 1980s. I commend the community charge to the House as an advance in controlling local government expenditure.

I also reject the attacks on the stock exchange and share ownership that were made in earlier speeches. Nearly 20 million people in this country now own shares. That is a wonderful statistic, and I hope to see it expand considerably in years to come. Attacks on share ownership are an attack on pension funds, and hence an attack on the coal miners in my constituency, who own part of the largest pension fund in the country. I am pleased for the coal miners who own shares, and I hope to see them own more.

Let me now return to the subject of the winding-up speeches, education. It is vitally important to the young of this country, but we have failed in some key areas. We have failed in terms of interesting and involving parents in how their children are educated, and in terms of interesting and involving business men more in that subject. Consequently, I was not surprised when one teacher told me the other day that when he had asked his class how many of them would run their own businesses in later years not one member of the class put up his hand. Yet by the law of averages in this country, where one person in seven is self-employed, at least three or four pupils should have done so. I believe that that is because the education system has not had enough business men involved in it. It has not enjoyed enough parental interest, or enough of an opportunity to develop children in the way that they need to be developed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak in such a brief session before the winding-up speeches. I wish to support the motion on the Gracious Speech.

9.13 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): My first speech in the House was made some time ago, and it is rather strange to be here again making a maiden speech as a new Member—especially such a brief speech so late in the evening. Let me first say a word about Mr. John Whitfield, my predecessor, who was in the House for four years. He was, to say the least, an abrasive character: indeed, he would have regarded that as a compliment. The best acknowledgement that I can give him is that he always believed in ensuring that people knew his opinions.

My constituency is far larger and more diverse than many people realise. It has many of the problems of an old industrial area, and I hope to be able to speak on those in the House in the not-too-distant future. However, today's debate is on the inner cities and education, and I should like to say a few brief words about that.

I share the concern expressed earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that the Government's new interest in inner cities should be more

than a token gesture, and that local authorities should not be bypassed in dealing with inner city problems. However, I am also concerned that all the help, if there is to be real help, should not go just to the large city areas, but should also go to the large northern towns which have, albeit on a smaller scale, many of the problems about which we have been talking today. The Dewsburys and the Huddersfields of this world have high levels of industrial dereliction and housing need, besides high levels of multiple deprivation which, although not on the same scale as Leeds, are the product of the same chronic under-investment.

One of the areas of greatest under-investment in our towns and cities is housing. When this Government were first elected in 1979 they made the decision to cut spending on housing by half. We are now seeing the consequences of that deliberate policy. The waiting lists are longer than ever before; there is less building and less improvement. There has been a real deterioration in the condition of the housing stock.

The Government have concentrated their energies on selling council houses. They do not seem to realise that the housing crisis cannot be solved by selling the houses. That may achieve other aims, but it will not contribute to the solution of housing problems, especially when local authorities are not allowed to use their capital receipts. The only way to solve or even to begin to solve this very real housing crisis is to build and to improve and repair more houses. The housing problem cannot be solved simply by changing the tenure of those who are already housed. I hope that the Government will embark on substantial investment as part of their about-turn on the inner cities.

I am profoundly disturbed by the Government's education proposals. Schools will be able to opt out of local authority control. I am desperately worried about the Government's plans for examinations at the ages of seven, 11 and 14. I do not want my children's education to be ruined by examination swords hanging over them and dominating the school curriculum in the way that the 11-plus examination was used to dominate junior schools when I was young.

Of course there is a place for examinations, but pupil profiles are infinitely more valuable. We cannot turn back the clock and allow primary schools to become testing places, with competition between schools and the comparison of results and with cramming for brighter children to boost school results, all of which we had in the 11-plus days and all of which would mean a return to the kind of testing that is proposed by the Prime Minister and this Government.

Does the Secretary of State intend to encourage schools to opt out? Has he thought through the consequences? Are we to have rural schools opting out and selecting and, by definition, therefore rejecting some pupils who might want to attend them because they are nearest to them? What will happen to pupils who have to travel a long distance to other schools? Who will pay? How long will their journey be? Will that really be in the educational interests of those children? What will be the basis of selection? Will bright children be selected? Will the children of pushing and motivated parents be selected? At the interviews to which the Prime Minister referred, will parents be asked whether they are willing to help with the PTA, with fund raising and, indeed, with funds?

The Secretary of State should devote his energies to promoting strong, local community schools that have

proper resources and that can cater for all the children in the area. If the Secretary of State is concerned about the education of all children, he will back down both on the proposal that schools should be able to opt out and also on the proposal that examinations should be held at seven, 11 and 14. A healthy education system does not consist simply of a series of hurdles. That is no education system; it is just an escape route for the few. If the Secretary of State does not believe that there is a case for investing in all of our children, he should not be responsible for education.

9.18 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): We have heard an impressive crop of maiden speeches. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) spoke eloquently and powerfully about his Conservative predecessor, Mark Robinson, whom we all remember. He was learned enough to quote Gibbon's "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" against the Tories' education proposals. The hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) praised Keith Joseph, my old sparring partner. Whatever we thought of Keith Joseph's policies, we all respected him for his courtesy and honesty in the House. It was nice to hear his successor's remarks about him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) spoke knowledgeably and with feeling about his city. From my visits to Bradford, I know how schools there desperately need investment in their fabric. The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) made an eloquent speech. We were certainly interested in the lessons that she drew from Castro's Cuba. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) spoke with sympathy about one of his predecessors, my old friend Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos, and gave a warning about the Government's education proposals. The hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) showed his interest in inner city problems. We look forward to hearing from him in future. My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) showed his concern about the problems in the town of Sunderland, which, of course, I know well, and about the problems of the north of England. We welcome him to the House. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) spoke about his constituency. I wish him well, but I cannot promise him that he will be returned unopposed, as was one of his lucky predecessors. Of course, I welcome back my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). Clearly, all those hon. Members will play an important part in our future debates.

Education plays a major part in the Gracious Speech. Indeed, in one of his characteristically modest press briefings, the Secretary of State for Education and Science promised that he would make an important wind-up speech on his proposals tonight.

Mr. Kenneth Baker indicated dissent.

Mr. Radice: We now know that his speech will not be important, so I can have more time to make my remarks.

Education was, of course, a key issue at the 1987 general election. It is right that it should have been so. Parents are more than ever aware that their children's life chances are to be decisively affected by the schooling that they receive. As for the individual, so for the nation as a whole. As we move towards a knowledge-based economy, it becomes ever clearer that our prosperity will depend on

the skills and talents of our people and that the most effective way in which we can develop such skills is by investing in education and training.

Contrary to the view that is put across by the popular press and, I am afraid, all too often by Government Ministers, there is much to praise about British education. Our primary school system is widely admired not only in this country but in other countries. Judging by examinations at ages 16-plus and 18-plus, standards have risen significantly over the past decade. So much for those who claim that the spread of comprehensive secondary education has led to a decline in standards. That is not the truth. The quality of our higher education is highly respected throughout the world. I particularly highlight the achievement of polytechnics and other public sector institutions which, over the past eight years, have widened access and preserved standards, in spite of the Government's failure to provide adequate funding. Of course, the Open university, set up by a Labour Government, is a triumphant success, so much so that, despite increases in charges, it is over-subscribed by 25,000.

For all the achievements, we cannot be complacent. Education faces challenges and problems, and many of the problems are of the Government's making. Year after year, the Secretary of State's own advisers—the HMI—have pointed to the lack of books and equipment, the poor state of repair of too many of our schools, and the shortage of teachers in key subjects, all of which represent a threat to educational standards. Yet in a report published a few days after the general election, the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts warned the House that Government spending plans for next year will lead to reductions in spending on books, equipment, repairs and maintenance. So much for the Secretary of State's claim during the general election that the Government are releasing enough resources to provide pupils with an adequate supply of books and equipment, and enough money to repair our schools.

Indeed, the Select Committee confirmed a point that I have made on a number of occasions, both to the Secretary of State and to his predecessor, that insofar as there has been some improvement in the resources going to education, it has come about largely because local education authorities have chosen not to follow the Government's spending plans. As the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), my old pal, reminded the Government yesterday, money is important in education. If the Government want to boost the supply of books and equipment, to tackle the backlog of repairs and maintenance and if they want smaller classes, they must provide extra resources.

One glaring weakness is the damaging education and training gap that has now opened up between this country and our main competitors. About two thirds of West Germany's labour force have a recognised academic qualification, compared with only half of the labour force in this country. In Japan, most young people stay in full-time education until they are 18. In Britain, fewer than one third of our young people stay in full-time education after the age of 16. Our proportion of 18-year-olds going into higher education is lower than that of many of our rivals. Yesterday the Royal Society revealed a brain drain from this country of high-flying scientists and engineers.

The obvious conclusion from those disturbing facts is that if we are to survive and prosper as a nation we must

[Mr. Radice]

carry through a major expansion of educational opportunities. Tragically for this country's future, the Secretary of State will not recommend such a programme or outline any relevant legislation to the House this evening. Instead, he will tell the House about the Government's ill-thought out and hastily conceived proposals which, if they become law, will disrupt Britain's education service, restrict opportunity, threaten standards and lead to an education service run on the basis of "the Secretary of State and Whitehall know best."

The Tory proposals were revealed to the nation for the first time at the general election, and a right old shambles ensued. Apart from making the obvious blunder of suddenly inserting a muddled and half-baked opt-out proposal into the Tory manifesto at the last minute, it was clear that the Secretary of State had failed to brief the Prime Minister about its implications. Hence the undignified spectacle of the Secretary of State, once he had learned how to switch on his car telephone, rushing out a disclaimer only hours after the Prime Minister had blurted out the awful truth that opt-out meant selection and charging.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that there is selection in this country? There is selection if one is in the privileged position of being able to afford private education. There is selection if one is in the privileged position of being able to move house to the school that one wishes one's children to attend. I have received two letters from constituents, informing me that people are moving house so that they can send their children to the school that they want. Therefore, there is selection, but we want to give opportunity to everyone, and not just to some.

Mr. Radice: The answer to the problem that the hon. Gentleman has just outlined is to ensure that every school is a good school and that they are all comprehensive schools. That is what we must do.

As the polls showed, the more the voters heard about the Tory's education plans, the more they disliked them. What had been held as the centrepiece of the Tory manifesto suddenly became the great unmentionable in polite Conservative circles. Given the shambles of the election, it is not surprising that the Secretary of State decided last week to invite his Ministers and their senior advisers to a well-publicised secret council of war. According to *The Independent*, a Department of Education and Science official is reported as saying that the meeting was designed to ensure the philosophical coherence of the Government's programme.

Given their record, I remain unconvinced about the Education Ministers' credentials on philosophical coherence. First, we have the chameleon-like figure of the Secretary of State, once a wet, now rapidly drying out as he tries to make himself acceptable as the Prime Minister's successor. In any case, he is far more interested in saying something that might grab tomorrow's headlines rather than dealing with the philosophy or logic of his own proposals.

Then we have the right hon. Gentleman's deputy, the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), who is extremely schizophrenic about her distinguished past in local government. They can always turn for ideological advice to the Under-Secretary, the hon.

Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), the self-styled philosopher king of Dartford, who, we understand, owes his surprising survival to his position as the Prime Minister's spy in Elizabeth house. Finally, there is the new Minister responsible for higher education, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), who until recently, I understand, was the prize fellow for All Souls. I am not sure that his new job is much of a prize. He has the unenviable task of trying to explain the Government's higher education policy.

Out of that high-powered philosophical discussion, two brilliant ideas emerge. The first is GREB. Apparently the Secretary of State has coined the acronym for his Bill of GREB, which stands for the great reform education Bill.

The second brilliant conclusion reached by the Secretary of State, again reflecting his characteristic modesty, is that GREB should at the very least be regarded as the equal of R. A. Butler's Education Act 1944. I find the Secretary of State's claim preposterous. The 1944 Act, drawn up by R. A. Butler and his Labour Under-Secretary Chuter Ede, was the fruition of a long period of detailed discussion and consultation. It followed and drew on the authoritative Hadow and Spens report on secondary education. It had a three-year gestation period from Green Paper to statute book. It was founded on a broadly based consensus, not only between parties but between the Government on the one hand and local government and the teaching profession on the other. By providing for the first time secondary education for all, it greatly expanded education opportunities. Finally, the 1944 Act established the principle of free schooling as of right.

The contrast between the 1944 Act and the proposals in the Queen's Speech is glaring. Whereas R. A. Butler proceeded on the basis of careful discussion and consultation to achieve the widest possible agreement, this Secretary of State sacrifices everything for instant publicity. I referred to the shambles over the opt-out proposals.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Radice: I shall not give way because I have little time.

The city technology idea was launched at the most recent Tory conference, when it was little more than a scribble on the back of an envelope. The main purpose was to win the Secretary of State a standing ovation from the party faithful. No wonder so little progress has been made in its implementation.

The national curriculum project was launched on "Weekend World". The Secretary of State was apparently more interested in pressing Matthew Parris than getting the idea accepted by those who will have to work with it. Whereas R. A. Butler worked constructively with local government and the teaching profession, the present Secretary of State works against the education partners. The CTCs, the open enrolment policy, the opt-out proposals and the delegation of school budgets will all weaken the local education authorities without putting any coherent alternative in their place.

The move against the Inner London education authority, euphemistically described in the Queen's Speech as reforming the structure of education in inner London, can only be motivated by political spite. It certainly has no

educational justification. In 1981, the committee on the future of inner London education, chaired by Lady Young, concluded that the problem of inner London "calls for a single authority of adequate size".

Even the 1979 committee, which was chaired by the present Secretary of State — then a Back-Bencher — rejected the proposal for London boroughs to opt out of ILEA on the ground that that would leave a rump of the poorer, deprived boroughs. If that was the case then, what is the argument for the Government's proposals now? Perhaps the Secretary of State will tell the House how such a policy is supposed to improve inner London education. Like too many of his colleagues, the Secretary of State's motto seems to be, "If I cannot control an institution, I shall either abolish it or seek to undermine it."

Certainly, the Secretary of State is an enthusiastic centraliser. Apart from the moves against the local education authorities that I have described, he proposes to remove the polytechnics from local government responsibility and put them under a body that he can ultimately control.

We have also heard disturbing rumours that the Secretary of State plans to run the national curriculum centrally from Elizabeth house. There is a strong case, on social and economic grounds, for an agreed core curriculum, but there is an overwhelming case against a national curriculum that is imposed and then controlled from Elizabeth house. I suspect that it will not work, and even if it did, it would be dangerously authoritarian. Paradoxically, at a time when the French are moving away from central control, the Secretary of State has ambitions to become the British Napoleon.

The main argument against the Government's education proposals is that they are attempting, under the guise of greater choice, to reintroduce selection and to expand charging for education.

First, a word about charges. For all the Prime Minister's reassuring words during the election that parents will have to pay only for a few extras, the reality is that parental contributions are already essential to maintain the basic curriculum, as many reports have shown. They are essential to ensure that the schools have the books and equipment that they need and that school buildings are properly maintained. However, it is clear that the Government want to move much further down the road of pay-as-you-learn. The Secretary of State has already announced, since the election, that he would like all authorities to follow the bad practice of a few and charge for music, field trips, swimming and many other sporting activities. For all the protestations to the contrary, it is surely revealing that whenever the Prime Minister mentions the so-called opt-out schools, as she did again last Thursday, she talks about school fees. The truth is that the Government want a pay-as-you-learn system, and if one cannot pay, one will not receive a good education. They should listen to the wise words of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North:

"I hope that it will be clearly understood that the proposals are designed to reinforce that collective tradition of maintained education and that they are not intended to be some oblique form of privatisation."—[*Official Report*, 30 June 1987; Vol. 118, c. 399.]

I hope that the Government take notice of what he says.

Finally, I turn to selection. Whatever the Government's protestations, the city technology colleges, the so-called popular schools and, most of all, the opt-out schools will, by their very nature, become selective. In choosing their

pupils they are bound to use the national tests — at seven, 11 or 14 — that the Secretary of State proposes to introduce. So, we could be talking about not only an 11-plus, but a seven-plus and a 14-plus. Instead of a unified national system of education we shall increasingly have a two-nation education system, with the lucky few going to the selective schools and the majority to the inferior, less prestigious schools.

We shall see the re-creation under another guise of the old grammar school-secondary modern divide. Tory educationists as well as Labour ones condemned the old 11-plus system as being unfair, divisive and inefficient. That is why the Prime Minister approved so many schemes for comprehensive reorganisation when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science. She got rid of more grammar schools than any other Secretary of State in living memory. When Sir Keith Joseph was Secretary of State for Education and Science he concluded that it would be wrong to bring back selection and that the most sensible policy, both for the nation and for its citizens, was to concentrate on raising the standards of all pupils. The present Secretary of State for Education and Science seems to have forgotten that very simple point and his proposals are without reasonable justification.

Today, the vast majority of parents get their first choice of school and rather than create first, second, third and fourth division schools, we should now set ourselves the task of making sure that whatever school parents choose it will be a good school. That means guaranteeing that all schools are well resourced, that teachers are well trained and regularly update their skills and that our curriculum and our examinations system stimulate and stretch. Excellence for all is what Britain needs, not high standards for a few achieved at the cost of the majority. We reject the Government's education proposals and we shall vote against them.

9.41 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): One of the pleasures about speaking in the debate on the Address is that one is able to congratulate a number of maiden speakers. We have heard many eloquent speeches, quite the largest number of maiden speeches that I have ever heard on one day. The hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) made an eloquent speech and started by paying a generous tribute to a friend on the Conservative side and, I think, a friend in many parts of the House, Mark Robinson. We are sorry that he is not with us. The hon. Member for Newport, West was ambitious in that he recommended hon. Members not only to read Gibbon's "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" but to read it again. He represents the town in which I was born and I hope that he will look after my birthplace well. I think that his wife was taught by one of my cousins who was an English teacher. I am sure that we shall hear much more from the hon. Gentleman.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) succeeds Sir Keith Joseph who made a considerable contribution to the previous Conservative Government. My hon. Friend spoke about the needs of the north and spoke movingly about the confidence of the people of the city of Leeds. He welcomed the effect of the unified business rate upon that city. He also welcomed our

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

education policies, particularly because of the significance that they may have in the inner city part of his constituency, Chapeltown.

Then we heard the maiden speech by the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall). It was a rigorous attack on capitalism. The hon. Gentleman has a gloomy attitude to life and I do not agree with him that we are on the edge of a major recession. His speech was a vigorous defence of old-style Socialism and I have no idea how Mr. Hugh Hudson will present that or the hon. Gentleman in future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) made an eloquent maiden speech, and spoke from her great experience in local government. She is a strong supporter of competition in local government services and I was glad to hear that she is such a strong defender of the green belt, protecting the interests of her own constituency. There is a consequent obligation for more development in our inner cities.

Then we heard a speech by one of the Welsh Nationalists, the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones). He spoke of his predecessor, Keith Best, and paid tribute to the assiduous work that Mr. Best did in that constituency. The new hon. Member for Ynys Môn is a most eloquent speaker and I congratulate him on his speech. He said that in the election some political maps that appeared on television excluded Ynys Môn. I thought Vincent Hanna had struck again. I am quite sure that he will represent his constituency effectively.

Then we had a speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran), who is bringing clearly to the House his considerable experience in industry in the west midlands and in the Confederation of British Industry. He spoke from his experience of how effective urban development corporations are.

We had a speech from the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) who, I am sure, will be a worthy successor to Gordon Bagier. Then we had a speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), who follows a very popular former colleague of ours, Peter Rees. My hon. Friend brings to the House a practical business experience. He made a very eloquent and robust defence of our programme, particularly in the area of education.

Finally, I welcome back to the House the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). We are very sorry that she had to come in by defeating John Whitfield. She made her second maiden speech tonight and I am sure that she will be welcomed by many on both sides of the House who remember her when she represented Bolton, West.

Many hon. Members today referred to the proposal of education reform outlined in the Gracious Speech, as did many speakers on other days. The main proposal on education in the Gracious Speech is the establishment of a national curriculum. We want all our children to receive a good education—wherever they live, whatever type of school they go to and whatever their ability. That expresses a unity of purpose. There is no divisiveness here, there are no exceptions and there will be no preferential treatment. If Opposition Members think that, it is in their imagination. The reality is that we stand for higher standards and greater quality for all our children. That is what we shall deliver.

Our chosen instrument is the national foundation curriculum. This will be an entitlement for all five to

16-year-olds. All children will get the breadth and balance of agreed programmes of study in the foundation subjects—maths, English, foreign language, science, history, geography and technology in all its aspects. We shall also find time within the national curriculum for physical education, music and art. All parents, wherever they live, will have the security of knowing that their children are receiving a fair deal—the national curriculum. Better, they will know, from the periodic tests to which the hon. Member for Dewsbury referred, what their children are achieving at the ages of seven, 11, 14 and 16. She expressed anxiety about this and I have heard anxiety expressed elsewhere. Therefore, I say to her that the idea of testing has been criticised, but that testing is nothing new. The process of assessment at those ages will involve testing. HMI inspections of primary schools show that reading is now tested in 93 per cent. of schools. A range of standardised tests—about nine—are used. Mathematics is tested in approximately 76 per cent. of the schools. What about the quarter of primary schools where maths is not tested and where these children may not be getting a fair deal?

Mr. Radice: What will the tests be used for?

Mr. Baker: They will be used to assess the ability of the child at ages close to seven, 11 and 14. They will also take into account the varying range of ability at each of those ages. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that this is not a particularly uniquely Conservative proposal. Tests have been implemented in English and maths by the Inner London education authority. They are used to assess the ability of the child and, if needed, to provide the basis for extra remedial coaching or teaching.

The Leader of the Opposition, in his speech last Thursday, not only attacked our proposals, and this particular proposal, but accused us of wishing to introduce them malevolently. That is nonsense, because the person who started the debate on the national curriculum in 1976 was a former Labour Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan. He called for

"rigorous educational standards . . . greater monitoring and accountability of teachers . . . greater concentration on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and . . . giving greater priority to technical, vocational and practical education."

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking to the House that his reforms, which many of us think will be a great improvement, will end the practice in many areas whereby the comprehensive system is rounded down to the level of the secondary modern instead of being rounded up to the level of the grammar school?

Mr. Baker: I shall come to that point in a moment. May I finish my point about the national curriculum? The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said that we might find some common ground. There is considerable agreement across the country that we must move this way. There is agreement that there should be a national curriculum—[Hon. Members: "A core curriculum."] The difference is on how we should arrive at that core foundation curriculum. I sense much consensus irrespective of party. We share a common interest in raising standards.

In the next few weeks, I shall be issuing a consultation document on what we intend by way of legislation on the national curriculum. There will be a debate not just in the

House but in the country. We want to listen to people in the education system. Indeed, the debate has already started and many educationists have commented on the proposal.

The second element of our proposals to reform and improve education covers the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind). Another major strand of our policy is to involve parents more in the education of their children—to bring them more into the education system. The trend has been growing for the past 10 years; it has not happened suddenly. There has been greater parental involvement, and every report from the inspectors says that if parents can be attracted to visit a school, even once a term, and to take an interest, we shall begin to build a bridge between the home and the school which will improve the education of the child and improve the school itself.

Dr. Cunningham: Where does the right hon. Gentleman send his children to school?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman refers to my children. I thought that the Labour party deplored the practice of dragging into politics the families of politicians. I should have thought that the latter days of the election campaign showed the danger of that path. I stand by the choice that I made, and I want more parents to be in a position to exercise choice in the education that their children receive in the state system. Much humbug and hypocrisy is talked about the matter. If the members of the shadow Cabinet are so convinced about the sanctity of public provision and the consequent limitation of choice, why do not more of them live in council houses in their constituencies?

Mr. Radice *rose*—

Mr. Baker: I must not give way to someone who has benefited from an independent education. [*Interruption.*] I want to consider open enrolment. That has been strongly—

Mr. Radice: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Baker: I want to turn to our policy of open enrolment which will allow parents—

Mr. Radice: Give way.

Mr. Baker: I will not give way.

I want to consider the policy of open enrolment which will allow parents greater choice—

Mr. Radice: Give way, give way.

Mr. Baker: I know that this may be the last appearance of the hon. Member for Durham, North but never mind.

I want to consider the policy of open enrolment. Under that policy parents will have a much greater say over the choice of the school in the state-maintained sector which they want their children to attend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) has drawn to my attention a case in Birmingham. This has not occurred in ILEA, Haringey or Brent. It has occurred in the city of Birmingham which the Labour party boasts is under moderate control. The school in question is Baverstock, which is a very popular comprehensive school. However, the Labour education committee has set an admission limit on that school. The headmaster of the school, Mr. Perks, has offered to take an extra class in September for 30 children who have been denied access to the school. According to *The Times Education Supplement*:

"Most of the parents who have been refused the school of their choice claim to be from working-class backgrounds and many are Labour supporters. The council's refusal has angered them and now threatens to split the Labour group."

Mrs. Shirley Truckle, a member of the Labour Party for 20 years . . . claims . . . that . . . "I have not been offered any choice about which school"

her son

"should go to."

That is the reality of Labour councils in practice.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Baker: The head of that school wants the children, the children want to go to the school, and their parents want the children to go there. The school wants to take the children. The only group saying no is the Labour-controlled education committee. That is what we want to change. Our policy will bring a major extension of parental choice and influence.

Mrs. Mahon *rose*—

Mr. Baker: Next week I shall be issuing a consultative document on this policy—

Mr. Ashdown *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must tell new hon. Members that if the Secretary of State does not give way, they must not persist.

Mr. Baker: I am reluctant to give way to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who is the education spokesman for the Liberal party, because if I give way to him, I shall have to give way to the education spokesman from the SDP.

Mr. Ashdown *rose*—

Mr. Baker: I am sorry, I will not give way to the hon. Member for Yeovil.

The hon. Member for Durham, North referred to the creation of two types of schools. I do not accept that argument at all. I do not believe that local education authorities will allow their less popular schools to sink because these schools will also be subject to the national curriculum. They will also be able to benefit from our policies.

One nation in education is not the same as one system of education. Some schools are better than others. Parents want to get their children into those schools and they are willing to move house to do that. Teachers want to work in those schools. Good people come forward to serve as their governors. I have not invented unpopular schools. They are a feature of the system defended so fully and uncritically by the Labour party. I am concerned about pupils in all those schools. I want to raise standards for all and I do not believe that that can be guaranteed by uniformity. I put my trust in diversity and pluralism. I want a choice of schools—comprehensive, grammar and grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges, independent schools and church schools. I want to liberate those forces which will apply upward pressure for improvements.

We need a set of policies to stimulate those changes. There is a revolution in hand. We have listened to the fears, hopes and aspirations of the parents. We want to make our schools more accountable. Choice is the lever. The Labour party's denial of choice angers parents and frustrates children.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to*.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 250, Noes 360.

Division No. 1]

[10 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony (*Newham NW*)
Barnes, Harry (*Derbyshire NE*)
Barnes, Mrs Rosie (*Greenwich*)
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. (*D'n't'n & R'dish*)
Birmingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (*D'mline E*)
Brown, Nicholas (*Newcastle E*)
Brown, Ron (*Edinburgh Leith*)
Bruce, Malcolm (*Gordon*)
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies (*Fife NE*)
Campbell, Ron (*Blyth Valley*)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex (*Mont'g*)
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David (*S Shields*)
Clarke, Tom (*Monklands W*)
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank (*Stockton N*)
Cook, Robin (*Livingston*)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (*Lanelli*)
Davies, Ron (*Caerphilly*)
Davis, Terry (*B'ham Hodge H'l*)
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank

Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John (*St Helens N*)
Ewing, Harry (*Falkirk E*)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret (*Moray*)
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank (*Birkenhead*)
Fields, Terry (*L'pool B G'n*)
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford (*Antrim S*)
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John (*Norwich South*)
Garrett, Ted (*Wallsend*)
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (*Tottenham*)
Griffiths, Nigel (*Edinburgh S*)
Griffiths, Winston (*Bridgend*)
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hogg, N. (*C'nauld & Kilsyth*)
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George (*Knowsley N*)
Howell, Rt Hon David (*G'dford*)
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John (*Coventry NE*)
Hughes, Robert (*Aberdeen N*)
Hughes, Roy (*Newport E*)
Hughes, Sean (*Knowsley S*)
Hughes, Simon (*Southwark*)
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry (*Alyn & Deeside*)
Jones, Ieuan (*Ynys Môn*)
Jones, Martyn (*Clwyd S W*)
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan (*Eccles*)
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony (*Stretford*)
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen (*Penistone*)
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (*Shettleston*)
Marshall, Jim (*Leicester S*)
Martin, Michael (*Springburn*)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (*Sheffield Heeley*)
Michie, Mrs Ray (*Arg'l & Bute*)
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A (*W'shawe*)
Morris, Rt Hon J (*Aberavon*)
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray (*Ogmore*)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn

Quin, Miss Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan (*Bootle*)
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie (*Dundee W*)
Ross, William (*Londonderry E*)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (*Oxford E*)
Smith, C. (*Isl'ton & F'bury*)
Smith, Cyril (*Rochdale*)
Smith, Rt Hon J. (*Monk's E*)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann (*Dewsbury*)
Taylor, Matthew (*Truro*)
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth (*Gower*)
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew (*Angus E*)
Welsh, Michael (*Doncaster N*)
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. (*Carm'then*)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David (*Bolton SE*)

Tellers for the Ayes:

Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Banks, Robert (*Harrogate*)
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas (*Pembroke*)
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. (*Brighton K'pto'n*)

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (*Gravesham*)
Arnold, Tom (*Hazel Grove*)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. (*Mole Valley*)
Baker, Nicholas (*Dorset N*)
Baldry, Tony

Bowden, Gerald (*Dulwich*)
 Bowis, John
 Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
 Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
 Brandon-Bravo, Martin
 Brazier, Julian
 Bright, Graham
 Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
 Brooke, Hon Peter
 Brown, Michael (*Brigg & Cl't's*)
 Browne, John (*Winchester*)
 Bruce, Ian (*Dorset South*)
 Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
 Buck, Sir Antony
 Budgen, Nicholas
 Burns, Simon
 Burt, Alistair
 Butcher, John
 Butler, Chris
 Butterfill, John
 Carlisle, John, (*Luton N*)
 Carlisle, Kenneth (*Lincoln*)
 Carrington, Matthew
 Carttiss, Michael
 Cash, William
 Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
 Channon, Rt Hon Paul
 Chapman, Sydney
 Chope, Christopher
 Churchill, Mr
 Clark, Hon Alan (*Plym'th S'n*)
 Clark, Dr Michael (*Rochford*)
 Clark, Sir W. (*Croydon S*)
 Clarke, Rt Hon K. (*Rushcliffe*)
 Colvin, Michael
 Conway, Derek
 Coombs, Anthony (*Wyre F'rest*)
 Coombs, Simon (*Swindon*)
 Cope, John
 Couchman, James
 Cran, James
 Critchley, Julian
 Currie, Mrs Edwina
 Curry, David
 Davies, Q. (*Stamf'd & Spald'g*)
 Davis, David (*Boothferry*)
 Day, Stephen
 Devlin, Tim
 Dickens, Geoffrey
 Dicks, Terry
 Dorrell, Stephen
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
 Dover, Den
 Dunn, Bob
 Durant, Tony
 Dykes, Hugh
 Eggar, Tim
 Emery, Sir Peter
 Evans, David (*Welwyn Hatf'd*)
 Evennett, David
 Fairbairn, Nicholas
 Fallon, Michael
 Farr, Sir John
 Favell, Tony
 Fenner, Dame Peggy
 Field, Barry (*Isle of Wight*)
 Fookes, Miss Janet
 Forman, Nigel
 Forsyth, Michael (*Stirling*)
 Forth, Eric
 Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
 Fox, Sir Marcus
 Franks, Cecil
 Freeman, Roger
 French, Douglas
 Fry, Peter
 Gale, Roger
 Gardiner, George
 Gill, Christopher
 Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian

Glyn, Dr Alan
 Goodhart, Sir Philip
 Goodlad, Alastair
 Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
 Gorman, Mrs Teresa
 Gorst, John
 Gow, Ian
 Gower, Sir Raymond
 Grant, Sir Anthony (*CambsSW*)
 Greenway, Harry (*Ealing N*)
 Greenway, John (*Rydale*)
 Gregory, Conal
 Griffiths, Sir Eldon (*Bury St E'*)
 Griffiths, Peter (*Portsmouth N*)
 Grist, Ian
 Ground, Patrick
 Grylls, Michael
 Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
 Hamilton, Hon A. (*Epsom*)
 Hamilton, Neil (*Tatton*)
 Hampson, Dr Keith
 Hanley, Jeremy
 Hannam, John
 Hargreaves, A. (*B'ham H'll Gr'*)
 Hargreaves, Ken (*Hyndburn*)
 Harris, David
 Haselhurst, Alan
 Hawkins, Christopher
 Hayes, Jerry
 Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
 Hayward, Robert
 Heath, Rt Hon Edward
 Heathcoat-Amory, David
 Heddle, John
 Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
 Hicks, Mrs Maureen (*Wolv' NE*)
 Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
 Hill, James
 Hind, Kenneth
 Hogg, Hon Douglas (*Gr'th'm*)
 Holt, Richard
 Horden, Sir Peter
 Howard, Michael
 Howarth, Alan (*Strat'd-on-A*)
 Howarth, G. (*Cannock & B'wd*)
 Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
 Howell, Rt Hon David (*G'dford*)
 Howell, Ralph (*North Norfolk*)
 Hughes, Robert G. (*Harrow W*)
 Hunt, David (*Wirral W*)
 Hunt, John (*Ravensbourne*)
 Hunter, Andrew
 Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
 Irvine, Michael
 Irving, Charles
 Jack, John
 Jackson, Robert
 Janman, Timothy
 Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
 Jones, Gwilym (*Cardiff N*)
 Jones, Robert B (*Herts W*)
 Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
 Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
 Key, Robert
 King, Roger (*B'ham N'thfield*)
 King, Rt Hon Tom (*Bridgwater*)
 Kirkhope, Timothy
 Knapman, Roger
 Knight, Greg (*Derby North*)
 Knight, Dame Jill (*Edgbaston*)
 Knowles, Michael
 Knox, David
 Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
 Lang, Ian
 Latham, Michael
 Lawrence, Ivan
 Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
 Lee, John (*Pendle*)
 Leigh, Edward (*Gainsbor'gh*)
 Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark

Lester, Jim (*Broxtowe*)
 Lightbown, David
 Lilley, Peter
 Lloyd, Sir Ian (*Havant*)
 Lloyd, Peter (*Fareham*)
 Lord, Michael
 Luce, Rt Hon Richard
 Lyell, Sir Nicholas
 Macfarlane, Neil
 MacGregor, John
 MacKay, Andrew (*E Berkshire*)
 Maclean, David
 McLoughlin, Patrick
 McNair-Wilson, M. (*Newbury*)
 McNair-Wilson, P. (*New Forest*)
 Madel, David
 Major, Rt Hon John
 Malins, Humfrey
 Mans, Keith
 Maples, John
 Marlow, Tony
 Marshall, John (*Hendon S*)
 Marshall, Michael (*Arundel*)
 Martin, David (*Portsmouth S*)
 Mates, Michael
 Maude, Hon Francis
 Mawhinney, Dr Brian
 Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
 Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
 Mellor, David
 Meyer, Sir Anthony
 Miller, Hal
 Mills, Iain
 Miscampbell, Norman
 Mitchell, Andrew (*Gedling*)
 Mitchell, David (*Hants NW*)
 Moate, Roger
 Monro, Sir Hector
 Montgomery, Sir Fergus
 Moore, Rt Hon John
 Morris, M (*N'hampton S*)
 Morrison, Hon C. (*Devizes*)
 Morrison, Hon P (*Chester*)
 Moss, Malcolm
 Moynihan, Hon C.
 Mudd, David
 Neale, Gerrard
 Needham, Richard
 Neubert, Michael
 Newton, Tony
 Nicholls, Patrick
 Nicholson, David (*Taunton*)
 Nicholson, Miss E. (*Devon W*)
 Onslow, Cranley
 Oppenheim, Phillip
 Page, Richard
 Paice, James
 Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
 Patnick, Irvine
 Patten, Chris (*Bath*)
 Patten, John (*Oxford W*)
 Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
 Pawsey, James
 Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
 Porter, Barry (*Wirral S*)
 Porter, David (*Waveney*)
 Portillo, Michael
 Powell, William (*Corby*)
 Price, Sir David
 Raffan, Keith
 Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
 Rathbone, Tim
 Redwood, John
 Renton, Tim
 Rhodes James, Robert
 Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
 Riddick, Graham
 Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
 Ridsdale, Sir Julian
 Roberts, Wyn (*Conwy*)

Roe, Mrs Marion
 Rossi, Sir Hugh
 Rost, Peter
 Rowe, Andrew
 Rumbold, Mrs Angela
 Ryder, Richard
 Sackville, Hon Tom
 Sainsbury, Hon Tim
 Sayeed, Jonathan
 Scott, Nicholas
 Shaw, David (*Dover*)
 Shaw, Sir Giles (*Pudsey*)
 Shaw, Sir Michael (*Scarb'*)
 Shelton, William (*Streatham*)
 Shephard, Mrs G. (*Norfolk SW*)
 Shepherd, Colin (*Hereford*)
 Shepherd, Richard (*Aldridge*)
 Shersby, Michael
 Sims, Roger
 Skeet, Sir Trevor
 Smith, Sir Dudley (*Warwick*)
 Smith, Tim (*Beaconsfield*)
 Soames, Hon Nicholas
 Speed, Keith
 Speller, Tony
 Spicer, Jim (*Dorset W*)
 Spicer, Michael (*S Worcs*)
 Squire, Robin
 Stanbrook, Ivor
 Steen, Anthony
 Stern, Michael
 Stevens, Lewis
 Stewart, Allan (*Eastwood*)
 Stewart, Andrew (*Sherwood*)
 Stewart, Ian (*Hertfordshire N*)
 Stradling, Thomas, Sir John
 Sumberg, David
 Summerson, Hugo
 Tapsell, Sir Peter
 Taylor, Ian (*Esher*)
 Taylor, John M (*Solihull*)
 Taylor, Teddy (*S'end E*)
 Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
 Temple-Morris, Peter
 Thompson, D. (*Calder Valley*)
 Thompson, Patrick (*Norwich N*)
 Thorne, Neil
 Thornton, Malcolm
 Thurnham, Peter
 Townend, John (*Bridlington*)
 Townsend, Cyril D. (*B'heath*)
 Tracey, Richard
 Tredinnick, David
 Trippier, David
 Trotter, Neville
 Twinn, Dr Ian
 Vaughan, Sir Gerard
 Viggers, Peter
 Waddington, Rt Hon David
 Wakeham, Rt Hon John
 Waldegrave, Hon William
 Walden, George
 Walker, Bill (*T'side North*)
 Walker, Rt Hon P. (*W'cester*)
 Waller, Gary
 Walters, Dennis
 Ward, John
 Wardle, C. (*Bexhill*)
 Warren, Kenneth
 Watts, John
 Wells, Bowen
 Wheeler, John
 Whitney, Ray
 Widdecombe, Miss Ann
 Wiggin, Jerry
 Wilkinson, John
 Wilshire, David
 Winterton, Mrs Ann
 Winterton, Nicholas
 Wolfson, Mark

Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

*Question accordingly negatived.
It being after Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.
Debate to be resumed tomorrow.*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motions and the Motions relating to Procedure (Personal Pension Schemes) and Procedure (Future Taxation) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—[*Mr. Durant.*]

CHANNEL TUNNEL BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Lords Message of 7th May in the last Session of Parliament, relating to the Channel Tunnel Bill, be now considered.—[*Mr. David Mitchell.*]

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Objection taken.

Ways and Means

1. PROFIT-RELATED PAY

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That provision may be made about schemes providing for the payment of emoluments calculated by reference to profits.—[*Mr. Norman Lamont.*]

10.18 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): Without wishing to detain the House I would like to comment briefly on the rather unfamiliar procedure that we have before us. We find that no fewer than 31 Ways and Means resolutions have been put before the House to be moved formally by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary.

I believe that we understand the reason for this procedure, it is because it is the intention of my right hon. Friends—[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: It is well understood by the House that my right hon. Friends intend to reintroduce many of the clauses contained in the Finance Bill that was not completely proceeded with at the time the general election was called. I think that the House has a special responsibility where methods of taxation are concerned, and I feel some anxiety at the enormous latitude that the House will be giving to the Treasury if we allow — [Interruption.]—all these resolutions to be passed without any comment.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Members standing at the Bar of the House do not wish to come into the Chamber, will they kindly leave?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I think, Mr. Speaker, that when such resolutions are before the House it is appropriate to draw attention to anxieties which I feel, and which I know are shared by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. In resolutions Nos. 2 and 3, for instance, we find the expression "including provisions having retrospective effect". I feel that, if that constitutes a precedent, it is a bad one, and if it is normal practice, it is bad practice. I think that it would be wrong for the House to pass on the nod a resolution that permits taxation to have retrospective effect without drawing attention to the fact that this is normally regarded by the House as very undesirable.

I should like to make two other brief comments. Resolution No. 13 refers again to Lloyd's underwriters. I have no interests to declare in this connection, but many of my constituents have been extremely anxious about the provisions included in the Finance Bill which received a Second Reading a few weeks ago. We hope that the Department has taken note of the substantial objections that were raised to the proposals originally included in the Finance Bill, and that when the Bill comes before us again, it will be amended to take account of those objections. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary, with the leave of the House, will be able to give us an assurance on that aspect before we proceed to pass the resolution tonight.

Finally, I should like to draw attention to resolution No. 17 of these 31 resolutions, dealing with companies' chargeable gains. I think that this resolution will give latitude to the Department to reintroduce the highly controversial clauses affecting life insurance companies

and their funds, which were received with great hostility before. I trust that the Department will not think that if the house passes these resolutions now, it constitutes tacit acceptance of the original proposals which aroused so much adverse comment before.

I do not wish to say more, but I hope that, before we leave this topic, my right hon. Friend will be able to give some assurances that, when the Finance Bill comes before the House again, we shall be allowed to debate all these matters very fully, and it will not be thought that we have sold the pass by approving the resolutions tonight.

10.23 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): There is, of course, nothing unfamiliar or unusual about bringing forward Ways and Means resolutions for a Finance Bill. That is the normal thing to do. Indeed, a Finance Bill cannot be introduced without the Ways and Means resolutions and if the resolutions were voted out, the Government would be unable to bring forward the Finance Bill. The Bill will be published in a few days' time. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) will know that, before the Dissolution of the last Parliament, we said that we intended to bring back the parts of the Finance Bill that were not carried before the Dissolution. That was announced by means of a Written Answer. The Ways and Means resolutions are the same as those that we had with the previous Finance Bill.

My hon. Friend referred to resolutions Nos. 2 and 3, and the reference to retrospective effect. In those resolutions, the phrase "retrospective effect" refers to the provisions of the Bill, when it is published, being backdated to Budget day. That, too, was made clear before Parliament was dissolved.

My hon. Friend referred to the resolution concerning Lloyd's. Discussions are continuing with Lloyd's. The chairman has said that he hopes that it will be possible for the Government and Lloyd's to reach an agreed view on the problem.

My hon. Friend also referred to chargeable gains and how they apply to the policy holders of life assurance. We have listened to what has been said. I cannot anticipate the Finance Bill. The resolution does not commit either my hon. Friend or the House to whatever the Finance Bill contains. The resolution is there so that the Finance Bill can be presented. I commend the resolution to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

1. PROFIT-RELATED PAY

Resolved,

That provision may be made about schemes providing for the payment of emoluments calculated by reference to profits.

Mr. Speaker then proceeded, pursuant to paragraph (3) of Standing Order No. 50 (Ways and Means motions) to put forthwith the questions necessary to dispose of the further motions, which were made by Mr. Norman Lamont.

2. ANNUITIES ETC.

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about contracts, schemes or other arrangements providing for the payment of annuities or lump sums.

3. RETIREMENT BENEFITS SCHEMES

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about retirement benefits schemes.

4. EMPLOYEE SHARE SCHEMES

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 47 of and Schedule 10 to the Finance Act 1980 and section 38 of and Schedule 10 to the Finance Act 1984.

5. CHARGES ON INCOME

Resolved,

That provision may be made as to the dates on which certain payments made between companies on or after 17th March 1987 are to be treated as received.

6. APPORTIONMENT OF INCOME ETC. OF CLOSE COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending Schedule 16 to the Finance Act 1972 with respect to accounting periods beginning on or after 17th March 1987.

7. FOREIGN PARTNERSHIPS

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made with respect to the taxation of persons resident in the United Kingdom who are members of partnerships resident outside the United Kingdom.

8. DUAL RESIDENT COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made with respect to companies which are resident in the United Kingdom and are also within a charge to tax under the laws of a territory outside the United Kingdom.

9. CONTROLLED FOREIGN COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made, in relation to dividends paid on or after 17th March 1987, with respect to the circumstances in which a controlled foreign company, within the meaning of Chapter VI of Part II of the Finance Act 1984, is to be regarded as pursuing an acceptable distribution policy.

10. OFFSHORE FUNDS

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending Schedule 19 to the Finance Act 1984.

11. DOUBLE TAXATION RELIEF: INTEREST ON OVERSEAS LOANS

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made amending sections 65 and 66 of the Finance Act 1982.

12. DISCLOSURE OF EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM INLAND REVENUE

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 58 of the Finance Act 1969.

13. LLOYD'S UNDERWRITERS

Resolved,

That charges to income tax (including charges for the years of assessment 1985-86 and 1986-87) may be imposed by provisions about underwriters.

14. RELIEF FOR LOSSES ON UNQUOTED SHARES

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made extending the definition of "excluded company" in section 37(12) of the Finance Act 1980.

15. CAPITAL ALLOWANCES FOR DWELLING-HOUSES LET ON ASSURED TENANCIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to capital allowances in respect of expenditure incurred on the construction of buildings consisting of or including dwelling-houses let on assured and certain other tenancies.

16. RECOGNISED INVESTMENT EXCHANGES

Resolved,

That provision may be made enabling enactments referring to The Stock Exchange to have effect, with or without modification, in relation to other recognised investment exchanges.

17. COMPANIES' CHARGEABLE GAINS

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to the treatment for the purposes of corporation tax of chargeable gains accruing to companies on or after 17th March 1987.

18. COLLECTIVE INVESTMENT SCHEMES

Resolved,

That provision may be made about collective investment schemes.

19. ROLL-OVER RELIEF: OIL LICENCES

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made excluding licences under the Petroleum (Production) Act 1934 and the Petroleum (Production) Act (Northern Ireland) 1964 from the classes of assets in section 118 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979.

20. BUILDING SOCIETIES: GROUPS OF COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made for the purposes of sections 272 onwards of Chapter II of Part XI of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 extending references to a company to include a building society within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986.

21. COMMODITY FUTURES, FINANCIAL FUTURES AND OPTIONS

Resolved,

That provision may be made—

- (a) for bringing gains on certain disposals of commodity futures, financial futures and options within the charge to capital gains tax or corporation tax on chargeable gains, and
- (b) with respect to the treatment under the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 of certain options.

22. PAY AS YOU EARN

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to the payments to which section 204 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (pay as you earn) applies.

23. SUB-CONTRACTORS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 70 of the Finance (No. 2) Act 1975.

24. MANAGEMENT PROVISIONS

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 118 of the Taxes Management Act 1970.

25. INHERITANCE TAX: INTERESTS IN POSSESSION

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of inheritance tax, provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made with respect to interests in possession in settled property.

26. CAPITAL TRANSFER TAX AND ESTATE DUTY: ACCEPTANCE IN LIEU

Resolved,

That provision may be made, with retrospective effect, with respect to the acceptance of property by the Commissioners of Inland Revenue in satisfaction of capital transfer tax or estate duty.

27. STAMP DUTY (EXEMPT SECURITIES)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 50 of the Finance Act 1987.

28. STAMP DUTY RESERVE TAX

Resolved,

That further provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made in relation to stamp duty reserve tax.

29. OIL TAXATION

Resolved,

That provision may be made—

- (a) amending sections 62 and 63 of the Finance Act 1987 and paragraph 5 of Schedule 2 to the Oil Taxation Act 1975 with respect to chargeable periods ending after 1st January 1987; and
- (b) amending Schedule 10 to the Finance Act 1987 with respect to March 1987 and subsequent months.

30. GOVERNMENT FEES AND CHARGES

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to certain powers to require the payment of, or to determine by subordinate legislation the amount of, fees or charges which are payable to Ministers of the Crown or to other persons who are required to pay them into the Consolidated Fund.

31. GOODS TRANSHIPPED AS STORES ETC.

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to goods transhipped as stores and the use in port, without payment of duty, of goods carried as stores.

PROCEDURE (PERSONAL PENSION SCHEMES)

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to matters which may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may make provision for the payment of sums out of or into the National Insurance Fund or the Northern Ireland National Insurance Fund in connection with provisions

relating to the payment of minimum contributions under Part I of the Social Security Act 1986 or Part II of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.

PROCEDURE (FUTURE TAXATION)

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to matters which may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain the following provisions taking effect in a future year—

- (a) provisions amending the Taxes Management Act 1970;
- (b) provisions with respect to amounts due by way of penalty or interest;
- (c) provisions with respect to interest on tax overpaid;
- (d) provisions with respect to the payment of corporation tax without assessment;
- (e) provisions amending Chapter II of Part XI of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970;
- (f) provisions amending section 418 of that Act; and
- (g) provisions amending section 87 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing resolutions by the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Fowler, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. Secretary Channon, Mr. Secretary Moore, Mr. Secretary Parkinson, Mr. John Major, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Peter Brooke and Mr. Peter Lilley.

FINANCE

Bill to grant certain duties, to alter other duties and to amend the law relating to the National Debt and the Public Revenue, and to make further provision in connection with finance, presented accordingly by Mr. Norman Lamont and read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 7.]

Domestic Furnishings (Flammability)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Boscawen.]

10.27 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Tonight I wish to raise the subject of the Government regulation of the flammability of domestic furnishings.

I extend a double welcome to my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude). First, I am delighted about his appointment as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for corporate and consumer affairs. Secondly, I welcome him to the Dispatch Box on the occasion of his first Adjournment debate.

This evening I wish to raise the danger that is posed by much modern polyurethane foam-filled furniture. It is a killer. Unless action is taken to improve safety standards, it may claim 3,000 lives over the next 10 years. I praise the *Yorkshire Post* for its campaign. Most of the victims will be children and old people. Many will die, not from burns but from the thick, acrid smoke and toxic fumes that are rapidly generated when foam ignites in upholstered chairs and settees. Over the past 25 years, deaths from furniture fires have increased fivefold. Now one in five domestic fire deaths involves upholstery, compared with one in 20 in 1962.

In arguing for better fire resistance in modern furniture, firemen emphasise the challenge that they now face. From the moment that a foam-filled settee catches fire, the occupants of a house may have no more than three minutes to escape before they are overcome by noxious gases, smoke and intense heat. By contrast, it takes a fire crew, on average, between five and eight minutes to reach the scene in response to a 999 call, which is usually made after a fire is well established. It is a race against time which they and the occupants of the house often lose.

In a recent Birmingham flat fire, in which six people died, the first firemen arrived four minutes after the emergency call, but it was already too late. Those who tackled the blaze cite it as a classic example of a fire involving modern furnishings. In 1984, the most recent year for which fire statistics are available, there were 157 confirmed deaths as a direct result of furnishings, and 130 deaths as an indirect result. After food, textiles are the most common source of material for a fire, amounting to a staggering 16,589 in 1984.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaugh): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gregory: I have only just got under way.

In North Yorkshire, fire fatalities in the 1980-84 period were 11, 11, four, nine and four. In the three neighbouring counties of Humberside, West and South Yorkshire, fire deaths amounted to 56 and 43 for 1983 and 1984 respectively. Clearly, there is a story behind these grim figures, which I shall reveal.

As long ago as 1978, a Home Office report "The Fire Risks of New Materials" concluded that manufacturers ought to produce upholstered furniture with increased fire resistance as a

"matter of the utmost urgency."

That followed research into the burning characteristics of furniture, which found that polyurethane foam

[Mr. Gregory]

produced more rapid fire growth with a greater risk to life and damage to property, than traditional furniture. The report stated:

"In mere terms of the volume we think it likely that upholstered furniture has the largest single potential of contributing to fire and toxicity hazards.

We cannot over-stress the urgency of the need to bring domestic and residential upholstered furniture back towards the level of fire performance prevailing before the introduction of polyurethane foams, in all or any sort of formulation. It is the speed of development of fire which we think makes all the difference by virtue of its effect on available escape time.

We therefore believe that quantity production of upholstered furniture with a reduced flammability is a matter of the utmost urgency."

That conclusion came as no surprise to thousands of firemen who had already faced the effects of modern furniture fires, not under controlled laboratory conditions but in people's front rooms. For 20 years, firemen have been pointing to the dangers, but in spite of better training, quicker response times and more sophisticated fire-fighting equipment, they are still unable to save many people because of the sheer speed with which flames and fumes spread. The loss of 10 lives at a store in Manchester in 1979 touched the nation. The coroner issued a stark warning about fires involving furniture containing polyurethane and polypropylene. He said:

"Anyone who has furniture with this foam either in a public place or in the home—and that means just about everybody—should remember that if a fire occurs there does seem to be a critical time of just a few minutes."

Although the exact cause of the Woolworth fire remained a mystery, furniture containing polyurethane and polypropylene was blamed for the rapid spread of the blaze. During the inquest, the head of combustion products at the Government's fire research station at Borehamwood, said that new fire regulations would soon be introduced requiring all furniture made in Britain to be resistant to smoking materials. He said:

"They will not set alight when in contact with a cigarette or a match."

But when the regulations were drafted in 1980, and revised in 1983, they fell short of that safety expectation. Although the first half of his promise was fulfilled in principle with the introduction of the compulsory cigarette test, the match test was made voluntary. Today, most furniture made in Britain is likely to fail the match test, not only in the laboratory but, more importantly, in the home.

In 1980, the Upholstered Furniture (Safety) Regulations were approved by Parliament. They followed two previous noteworthy publications; first, the report on "Fire Risks of New Materials" of November 1978, to which I have referred, and, secondly, British Standard 5852 part 1 1979 "Fire Tests for Furniture: Methods of Test for Ignitability by Smokers' Materials of Upholstered Composites for Seating". The former publication recommended that top priority should be to reduce ignitability from small ignition sources. A second priority was to reduce the rate of fire development. The British Standard test method addressed the matter of testing for ignitability by cigarettes and matches, the latter by a gas flame simulating a match. The regulations introduced the requirement for upholstered furnishings seating to be resistant to a smouldering cigarette, but for labelling only with respect to its performance in the match test.

The safety of domestic furniture is being dictated by those who use the cheapest materials which will satisfy the minimal cigarette requirement. Yet, since that tragedy in Manchester in 1979 fire-retardant treatments have been developed for most fabrics that cover foam, and safety standards have soared in contract furniture.

California has its own regulations. If I compare Los Angeles and greater Manchester, which are not too dissimilar in urban size, residential fires in greater Manchester generally result in twice as many fatalities as in Los Angeles. Examples of combustion-modified foams include Carefoam DX from Dunlopillo, made in Harrogate, and Beaverfoam, made in Derbyshire. Synthetic fabrics are available, such as those from Joseph Newsome and Sons of Batley, and the flame-resistant Dralon velvet developed by Lister of Bradford. Skopos Fabrics of Dewsbury have produced flame-retardant cotton furnishing fabrics for more than 10 years, which would add an estimated £24 to a £500 three-seater sofa. Therefore, the foams and fabrics are available.

West Yorkshire, which is a typical local authority, reveals that 20 per cent. of the fires in homes are caused by children playing with matches, which is a risk that is not covered by the present safety regulations. Nationally in 1984, only road accidents claimed more lives of children under 14. The Government's own body, the Property Services Agency, insists on fire-resistant furniture but the Government do not for their own citizens. Is that an example of double standards?

Although firemen and safety watchdogs have called repeatedly for the introduction of the match test to reduce the number of furniture fires, and were supported recently by some textile manufacturers, the industry was successful generally in persuading the previous Minister responsible for consumer affairs to shelve the match test in his review of the regulations. The compromise of a code of practice which aims to outlaw some of the worst combinations of fabrics and foams will not in any way encourage manufacturers to upgrade their products.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and should like to congratulate him on securing this important debate. On the code of practice, will the hon. Gentleman urge the Minister to tell us when that code will be published, or at least when the consultation document on that code will be published, so that we know what the Government now have in mind, however inadequate that might be?

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful for that intervention, not only for the encouragement to make this an all-party matter but also because it raises the valid point that we have still not yet seen the code of practice. Indeed, it is surprising how few people concerned with this great industry are aware of it. That applies also to the consumer bodies and I shall refer to that in a moment.

Mr. Holt rose—

Mr. Gregory: I shall give way if my hon. Friend will bear with me for a moment more.

I have suggested that cheap competition will win over safety. The code does not propose a match test equivalent. It was drafted by the Furniture Industry Research Association and was based on a biased questionnaire. One of the association's members who was sent the questionnaire has stated:

"to lobby the Government to delay the passing of more stringent legislation is tantamount to asking them unnecessarily to risk further loss of life". That is pretty strong stuff.

The code has gone to a Department of Trade and Industry working party, but its membership was hardly objective. Only one representative of the fire services was included in the 25-strong group. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, which is Europe's largest safety organisation was, amazingly, excluded. If the British Standards Institution had been consulted at an early stage it could have ensured that the safety measures in the code were subjected to proper validity tests. Even that key element was missing. The code cannot and will not be a soft option on safety.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way.

May I declare an interest, Mr. Speaker? Could I ask my hon. Friend whether, before embarking on his crusade, he took the trouble to speak to the furniture industry, whether he has been to FIRA, whether he has examined the nature of the problem on the ground as well as reading the *Yorkshire Post*? Will he accept an invitation from me, as the parliamentary spokesman for the furniture industry, to come with me to see the nature of the problem? Perhaps he might then suggest that we stop motor cars from going on the roads because they carry petrol, which causes fires in the same way as furniture?

Mr. Gregory: I am fascinated, as I am sure that the Registrar of Members' Interests will be, to hear your declaration which was not published in the Register of Members' Interests, which I sought to obtain before tonight.

Mr. Holt: It is.

Mr. Gregory: However, I congratulate you on this new interest—

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not me.

Mr. Gregory: I hear what you say—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gregory: I hear what my hon. Friend has said, and I shall take note of those points.

What should the Government now do? I should like to make five suggestions. First, if the Government are really determined to see safer furniture, they should set a firm date for the match test under BS 5852. Such a naked flame test would complement the existing cigarette test. That should be from 1 January 1988. There should not be a further three-year delay as proposed by the British Textile Confederation. That decision should be taken urgently and after advice from a truly representative group of consumer, industry, fire and trading standards sectors. But, in the light of the Minister's written reply today to my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward), will he give an assurance that match test equivalents will be implemented immediately?

Secondly, the Government should revise the regulations so that manufacturers cannot shelter behind a loophole on children's ages. Currently children's furniture designed exclusively for under-11-year-olds is protected, but who is to say that teenage brothers and sisters do not enjoy bean bags depicting the A Team and other television stars?

Thirdly, the penalties for contravention are clearly inadequate. Level five, which means a maximum of £2,000 and or three months' imprisonment, is not an adequate disincentive.

Fourthly, a levy should be imposed on the furniture industry to fund inspection and control by trading standards officers, rather than leaving it to the small local authority budgets. The industry, rather than the ratepayer, should fund impartial quality control.

Finally, there should be a public awareness campaign by the Government. Asbestos was known to be toxic for many years, but once the media and public became aware of the danger, it had to be removed. Most modern foam-filled furniture can create lethal fire conditions within three minutes. That means that a suite of furniture is an incendiary device.

While tonight I have suggested a five-point plan, I invite my hon. Friend the Minister, when replying to the debate, to advise how far domestic furniture sales will come within the general duty to trade safely, enshrined in the Consumer Protection Act passed by the House only last month, and how far specific regulations will still be required.

I welcome my hon. Friend in his new role, and hope that he will speak out for consumers. Public safety rather than industrial muscle and inertia should be the order of the day.

10.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Francis Maude): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) for his kind remarks. He has pursued this subject over the years with great vigour and force. During the past two years when I was lurking in the Whips Office, I was able to observe with some admiration the skill with which he deployed his arguments.

I am glad to be able to tell my hon. Friend and the House, especially the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), who raised the issue specifically, that today we issued consultation papers to all interested parties, setting out proposals for a new code of practice. As has been suggested, it will not be a voluntary code, but it will be a basis for new regulations to replace the Upholstered Furniture (Safety) Regulations 1980. It should be stressed that non-compliance with the provisions of the code would be a criminal offence.

Before I deal in detail with the issues, it is right to remind the House that the United Kingdom already leads the world in legislation on fire resistance of domestic furniture. Our insistence on resistance to ignition by a smouldering cigarette has been followed only by Ireland.

The 1980 regulations and the 1983 amendments addressed the question of ignitability alone. The reason for doing so was the availability at that stage of a new British standard method of test for ignitability. The regulations called up that standard as the basic underlying test method essential to all safety regulations. They made labelling concerning cigarette and match resistance a requirement from 1 October 1980 and resistance to cigarette ignition became mandatory from the end of 1982. It is a fact that the statistics on accidental domestic fires show that smouldering cigarettes are the main cause of fires that start in upholstered furniture, so the regulations went to the

[*Mr. Francis Maude*]

heart of a known and serious problem. Comparatively few fires start as a result of small flames such as those of a match.

The design and manufacture of upholstered furniture was revolutionised early this century by the invention of foam materials, made first from natural rubber and then from synthetics. These very versatile and relatively cheap materials combine the functions of the metal springs and fibre padding which used to make up the inside of easy chairs and sofas. They thus simplified furniture manufacture and greatly reduced costs to the consumer, as well as extending the range of consumer choice of the shape and appearance of furniture. The material which is now dominant as filling for upholstered furniture, as my hon. Friend knows, is polyurethane foam. The behaviour in fire of this material led to widespread concern, forcefully expressed over the years by my hon. Friend and others. The amendment regulations of 1983 introduced positive labelling for upholstered furniture in relation to both cigarette and match tests. The intention was to encourage the consumer to see and buy furniture with greater resistance to ignition than that required by law to enable informed and clear decisions to be made.

Mr. Holt: I have listened to my hon. Friend. Do the Government intend to introduce legislation, or a code of practice, for the carpet industry as well as for the furniture industry? What plans do the Government have to introduce the banning of cigarettes and matches, which are the igniters of furniture and carpets?

Mr. Maude: Carpets will come under the general safety requirement at the appropriate time, under the Consumer Protection Act 1987. Of course, my hon. Friend makes a vivid point in suggesting that the only safe way of avoiding fire is to avoid any flame whatever. There is no such thing as a completely safe house; there cannot be. All that we can do is to try to establish regulations that outlaw the most dangerous of substances and materials, and enable the customer to make sensible and informed choices as far as possible.

The regulations, as amended in 1983, also imposed a stringent requirement on children's upholstered furniture of a particularly lightweight and moveable kind. I stress again that the existing regime in the United Kingdom is the most rigorous in the world. We take the view that the most constructive approach to the problem is the development of types of foam with better performance characteristics. To that end the industry and my Department jointly financed a research programme at Queen Mary college. The persistence of researchers has recently been rewarded by a breakthrough. From this year there are grades of polyurethane foam available on the market with significantly improved resistance to ignition, with satisfactory technical qualities, and at acceptable prices. Meanwhile there have been promising technical developments in textile materials used for covering furniture, which enable the furniture manufacturers to choose from a wider range of materials with match flame resistances than was available in 1980. These developments widen the options available for legislation. We have therefore been urgently considering what further steps should be taken.

It was suggested some 18 months ago that new legislation could be loosely based on parts of a

classification scheme produced by the Furniture Industry Research Association, which classifies both filling materials and covering materials. This makes it possible to devise a code of practice under which the less fire-resistant covers would only be permitted in combination with the more fire-resistant fillings, and vice versa. This approach has the merit of obliging both groups of component manufacturers to upgrade their products. It is a flexible and imaginative response to the problem. This approach seems to me to provide better protection for the consumer than either of the apparently available and simple measures that are generally advocated in this field—the mandatory match test for covering materials, and a complete ban on polyurethane foam as a filling material. My hon. Friend homed in on that in the debate. The most fundamental objection to the match test on its own is that it says nothing at all about the fire resistance of the filling materials. It is a test that covers just the covering material and not the filling material.

The code of practice proposals will be mandatory and will enable furniture manufacturers for the first time properly to specify the ignitability characteristics of their components, whether covering fabrics, filling fibre or polyurethane foam. They can be applied to loose cushions and eventually to loose covers and to materials sold for upholstering or re-upholstering furniture bought separately or already in the possession of the customer.

Most importantly, they will encourage the use of the more fire resistant polyurethane foams now available.

The draft code of practice and accompanying consultation documents are being issued today. Replies are requested by the end of September and I shall make a statement as soon as I have considered all the comments. I should like to emphasise that all constructive comments will be welcome.

Mr. Holt: Would my hon. Friend care to say how the Government intend to regulate the importation of furniture from overseas? Will such furniture be tested at the port of entry or at the port from which it is sent? What proposals do the Government intend to produce for imported furniture?

Mr. Maude: I cannot answer that point now, but I shall make sure that my hon. Friend has an answer as soon as possible.

In all these areas we have to take account of the customer's right to choose. It is essential that consumers be warned of possible flammability hazards. None the less, they may choose an item on the grounds of comfort, cost, appearance or durability. There is a clear case for minimum standards for upholstered furniture and for mattresses and we are legislating for these. Our present aim about other furnishings is to ensure that consumers are able to make choices based on clear and reliable information.

This is not a simple subject and there are no simple answers. Our standards are already the strictest in the world, but what is acceptable at one time may become unacceptable later. The regulations made in 1980 and amended in 1983 now require radical revision. I am grateful to all those who have contributed to the wider debate in the working group set up last year by my predecessor. They included technical and commercial experts from the furniture, textiles and chemical industries and from research establishments in these fields, as well as local authority and fire brigade professionals.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister has told us about the people who contributed to the working group. He will be aware that the Fire Brigades Union was not invited to take part in that. Will he give a guarantee that all those who are concerned with fire protection and fire safety will have their views properly evaluated and taken into account in the consultative process?

Mr. Maude: Yes. The consultation papers will be available to anybody who expresses an interest and the comments of such people will be welcomed. I think that the fire professional who sat on the working group was a fire officer from Manchester who had particular knowledge of the Woolworth store plan, about which reference has been made. Comments from all those who have a professional interest in the matter will be welcomed.

All of us involved in this subject are engaged in an effort to save lives, and nothing could be more important. The issue today of this draft code of practice and the accompanying document is a major step towards new and better legislation on the flammability of domestic furnishings. I look forward to a wide range of constructive responses and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for York for once again raising this matter. I apologise if I have not dealt with all of the specific points that he raised, but he will understand that I have been in this post for a fairly short time and am not as familiar with the intricacies of the subject as I hope to be in a few months. I shall certainly make sure that he receives detailed replies to all the points that he has raised.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 2 July 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL

Read the Third Time, and passed.

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL

Considered; to be read the Third Time.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL

To be considered upon Thursday 9 July.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL

To be read a Second Time upon Thursday 9 July.

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL (By Order)

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered upon Thursday 9 July.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL (By Order)

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second Time upon Thursday 9 July.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farm Buildings

1. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to encourage farmers to notify Government sponsored enterprise agencies of unused farm buildings in their localities.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): While it may be useful in particular instances for farmers to notify enterprise agencies in rural areas of unused farm buildings. I am anxious that, whenever possible, they themselves should make use of such buildings for diversified enterprises.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply, but will he take note from me and from others who have been involved in enterprise agencies that the hardest commodity for a new-start business man to find is premises? Whereas in any locality it is easy to find a list of good commercial premises, those are beyond the reach

of the new-start business man, who must needs make his commencement in irregular properties. That is where the agricultural community might have a valuable part to play—in identifying such properties from time to time.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. I hope that he will not refer to such properties as irregular, but they are suitable for the purposes that he has in mind. I shall make sure that if there are any ways of helping in this direction we shall do so.

Sir Hector Monro: On the important issue of alternative use for buildings and land, has my right hon. Friend seen any greater flexibility among planning authorities in giving approval for this sort of development? Is he considering giving further guidance?

Mr. Gummer: That is largely a matter for the Department of the Environment, but I have begun a series of meetings around the country in which I have put before planning officials, chairmen of planning committees and local farmers the various problems that are involved, and the advantages of being more flexible in this way. The reaction so far has been extremely good, and I hope that that will continue.

Mr. John: Is the Minister aware that the chairman of the Development Commission says that there are many more inquiries for premises than there are premises available, and that if the Government were to allocate an extra £10 million to the Development Commission annually that could easily be taken up in providing premises for people moving to rural areas to create employment?

Mr. Gummer: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. We are now doing a whole range of things. After the consultation period is over we shall be announcing a whole range of new ways in which we shall help in that direction. I am pleased to see that those moves have the general support of the hon. Gentleman's party.

Wool

2. **Sir David Price** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's policy towards the production of wool, from British farms.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): Our policy is to encourage the production and improvement of British wool, which can form a valuable part of sheep producers' returns and is in demand on domestic and world markets.

Sir David Price: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that Britain is the largest producer of raw wool in Europe, but that there is still a potential for further increase if it is rightly encouraged? Will he also accept that, environmentally, sheep are nature's best lawnmowers?

Mr. Thompson: Original lawnmowers, I should imagine. I acknowledge that the British sheep and wool industry is the most important and most significant in Europe. Our exports of wool are increasing. For example we export £8 million of wool more a year to Japan than we did three or four years ago. I thank my hon. Friend for his question.

Mr. Randall: Is the Minister aware that manufacturers of high quality woollen products are having difficulty in

obtaining raw materials, such as angora, cashmere and mohair, which come mainly from China? What steps will he take to encourage agricultural diversification in this area?

Mr. Thompson: Some firms in my constituency use these fine wools, and I acknowledge that occasionally they have difficulty getting those wools, but there was diversification into these wools without encouragement from us. We are now encouraging it. At present there is a strategic plan on this matter at Reading university and we hope increasingly to supply our market for fine wools from this country.

Common Agricultural Policy

3. **Mr. Strang** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total cost in sterling of the common agricultural policy throughout the European Community in 1986.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): Expenditure on the common agricultural policy in 1986 was £13,800 million.

Mr. Strang: Is the Minister aware that he was right to acknowledge yesterday that this year's prices package represents a failure by the Council of Agriculture Ministers to tackle the problem of the costly food mountains in Europe? Will he assure the House that when he seeks to resolve that problem it will not be at the sacrifice of British livelihoods and jobs, and that there must be greater national responsibility within the Community for agricultural production?

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly acknowledge that there is a long way to go, but I would not say that yesterday's agreement was a failure. It marked some significant improvements in dealing with CAP reforms, particularly in two areas where the costs have been rising substantially, namely, cereals and oilseeds. That followed from a more significant reform in dairy and beef in the December package and showed a change in direction. It was not a failure, but I acknowledge that there is a long way to go. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, while obviously everyone in agriculture will have to bear some part of the containment of the surpluses, it will be my determination to ensure that there is no undue sacrifice in any sense for British farmers and that they get a fair deal.

Sir Richard Body: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is also a human cost attaching to the CAP and that, despite the vast sums being spent, the number of farmers in the original Six has fallen from 21 million to 7 million? In this country their number is still declining at the rate of 3,000 or 4,000 a year. Is it not time that we asked ourselves whether price support, in accordance with the CAP, has the effect of supporting farmers?

Mr. MacGregor: I know of my hon. Friend's great interest in these matters. He has written interestingly about them. The decline in numbers is not just associated with the structure of the CAP. I am sure that he will acknowledge the substantial improvements in efficiency that have taken place within farming, which obviously have had an impact on the numbers involved.

Mr. Livsey: Does the Minister recognise that sheep production is the ninth highest cost under the CAP? Will

he ensure that the future of the sheep industry in Britain, particularly in the less-favoured areas, is protected in the coming negotiations?

Mr. MacGregor: Naturally, I am well aware of the importance of sheep production in the less-favoured areas. We have yet to see what the Commission's review of the sheepmeat regime will produce. I have already made it clear that I am not prepared to accept anything that involves unfair discrimination against the United Kingdom. That is why we managed successfully to get the proposal for a headage ceiling on the payments for ewe premium dropped from the discussions in the recently completed package.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Is my right hon. Friend aware that no less than 20 per cent. of the FEOGA costs are related to the storage of surpluses? If he is successful in bringing production more into balance with needs, will he make strenuous efforts to make it clear to the Treasury that the United Kingdom farming industry could benefit by the use of such funds released, in part at least, for restructuring itself for the future?

Mr. MacGregor: I understand exactly what my hon. Friend says. I have made it clear that we hope that some part of those funds could be used for alternative land use, diversification and so on, to enable structural adjustments in the countryside to take place. That would also provide alternative income for farmers and others in the rural economy. The cost of storage, let alone disposal, is so high at the present time that it is unrealistic to think that anything like that total proportion could be devoted to alternative schemes.

Mr. Beggs: Will the Minister tell the House whether the Anglo-Irish Agreement has in any way reduced the extent of smuggling of livestock from Northern Ireland into the Irish Republic? Does he agree that the smuggling of livestock into the Republic from Northern Ireland threatens the viability of meat plants in Northern Ireland and also results in fraudulent claims for payments from EC funds and therefore abuses the common agricultural policy?

Mr. MacGregor: The question of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and what is discussed under it is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. In terms of exports of beef from Ireland to Northern Ireland or elsewhere, the hon. Gentleman will have noted that in the current price fixing that has just been completed we obtained a higher devaluation of the green pound than of the Irish punt, and this has had a favourable impact on the trading position of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: As any sales of a surplus product reduce the cost of the common agricultural policy, can my right hon. Friend tell me why Live Aid's request to buy surplus butter to turn into, I understand, buttermilk—which sounds a bit unlikely—to send to Africa has been turned down?

Mr. MacGregor: To some extent, any sales of the surpluses in intervention provide some reduction in the overall cost. However, as my hon. Friend knows, the costs of disposal out of intervention are still a very significant part of the CAP. I shall have to look into the other point that she has raised and I shall write to her.

Mr. John: The Minister has been quoting 1986 figures. Will he admit to the House that since then the situation has deteriorated in that the CAP budget is now £16 billion, which is more than a £3.5 billion over-run? Therefore, we are talking about a cost to the Community of about £20 billion.

Mr. MacGregor: I acknowledge that the cost of the CAP has risen. That is why the Government are devoting such strenuous efforts to trying to get further reforms in the CAP and to get the costs down.

Green Pound

4. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been achieved in negotiating a substantial devaluation of the green pound.

Mr. MacGregor: The Agriculture Council earlier this week agreed devaluations to reduce MCAs by 5.5 points generally and by 7 points for beef, with no change in the green rate for sheepmeat.

Mr. Kirkwood: Is the Minister aware that there is great disappointment at the continuing green pound gap? Is he aware that specialist beef producers in my constituency will be prejudiced to the tune of about 10 per cent. as opposed to their competitors in the EC? The Minister has said that United Kingdom producers should not bear a disproportionate and substantial competitive disadvantage compared to producers in the EC as a result of receiving lower prices. Why did he not hold out for a higher devaluation?

Mr. MacGregor: I should like to put three points to the hon. Gentleman. First, since February the beef MCAs have fallen by almost 16 points, and that makes a big difference. Of course, that also takes into account the strengthening of sterling, but it takes account, too, of what has been achieved in the negotiations. Secondly, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that in this price fixing we obtained a better green pound change by a long way than the average for the Community. We obtained a change of plus 2.4 percentage points, compared with plus 0.5 percentage points average for the Ten—better than the Irish and the French. Thirdly, he will be aware that green rate devaluations, while they help farmers and raise support prices, also have other impacts that we had to take into account. On balance, I think that we got it absolutely right.

Mr. Conway: Bearing in mind the importance of this devaluation of the green pound for farmers' incomes, will my right hon. Friend comment on the statement by the president of the National Farmers Union that, as a result of these negotiations and the statement yesterday, farm incomes will decrease by 15 per cent.? That is not the impression of many of us on this side of the House.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. Let me make it clear again that, although there are still some calculations to be done, because we have only just completed the negotiations, the more accurate picture is that the overall result of the price package is about neutral for British farmers. Of course, other things affect farm incomes, many of which we cannot be certain about this year—for instance, the harvest. No doubt the president of the National Farmers Union examined some of those matters, and his figure is therefore very uncertain.

Mr. Home Robertson: Does the Minister intend that trading in beef should take place on a fair basis between producers in the United Kingdom and Ireland and in other parts of the Community, and if so, when?

Mr. MacGregor: Obviously, MCAs fluctuate. It will depend on realignments and on the strength of sterling. Over the past few months, however, we have made considerable improvements in the trading position for beef farmers.

Dairy Industry

5. **Mr. Matthew Taylor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the dairy industry in England and Wales.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I believe that the industry is now on a much sounder footing following last December's Council agreement on measures to improve the balance of the market. The next step will be to consider what measures should follow the current quota system when it expires in 1989.

Mr. Taylor: Will the Minister assure the many dairy farmers in this country that the 1984 pledge to protect small farmers producing fewer than 200,000 litres will be honoured in any milk quotas or other cutbacks that might be instituted? Secondly, will he pursue the suggestion repeated by the EEC on many occasions that it will be sympathetic to preferential quotas to areas most suited to dairy production, such as Cornwall?

Mr. Thompson: The areas most suited to dairy farming were in at the beginning with quotas, and have them, simply because of the very nature of the business. We are always aware of the small farmer, and the small family farmer, and I shall bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Harris: Can my hon. Friend give any indication of the likely timetables on the discussions on milk quota leasing? Can he also say what is the position of people who wish to enter into such leasing arrangements here and now, while those discussions are proceeding?

Mr. Thompson: We have the sort of answer that my hon. Friend seeks on quota leasing, and we are hastening to get the small print out of the way as soon as the price fixing is finished.

Mr. Home Robertson: As the Minister has just said that the present quota system will technically disappear in 1989, will he tell us whether the Government intend to see the introduction of a new quota system to continue after 1989? Has any consideration been given to the idea of extending the quota principle to cover other commodities, as a means of regulating production and protecting the interests of producers, consumers and, indeed, taxpayers?

Mr. Thompson: Discussions are continuing on whether quotas should be introduced into the farming of sheep, cereals and other products. Indeed, we constantly discuss, debate and argue about those matters on these Benches and upstairs. At present, however, I cannot and will not speculate on the future of quotas in 1989.

Common Agricultural Policy

6. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement giving details of his proposals to reform the common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall promote measures that are fundamental to the interests of British farmers. This must include the reduction of surpluses and their associated budgetary costs, and increased market influence in the operation of the CAP. I shall also support complementary measures widening the range of opportunities open to farmers and helping to develop the rural economy generally.

Mr. Hunter: While awarding my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister 10 out of 10 for her performance in Brussels, rather than the eight out of 10 reluctantly conceded to her yesterday by an Opposition Member, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he has seen an article in today's edition of *The Times*, headed

"EEC package puts up UK food prices"?

The article speaks of a costly package making nonsense of British attempts to control EC spending. Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to comment on the accuracy or otherwise of that report?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I was somewhat surprised by the report in *The Times*, both because it gave prominence to one of the most insubstantial parts of the package and also because it gave a very inaccurate impression. The plain fact is that the effect of this package on food prices is minimal. It is less than one tenth of 1 per cent. on the retail prices index. It is interesting to reflect on the fact that the overall effect on food prices will be less for a family of four than the price of a small bar of chocolate per week. That puts it in context.

Mr. Madden: Has the Minister seen the calculation that if surplus grain were to be placed in a plastic tube a foot wide it would go round the globe more than 600 times? Do not the CAP food surpluses represent a grotesque obscenity in a world where children are starving to death every second? Does it not also represent a major burden on both British consumers and other consumers? Is this not the time for dramatic action to deal with the waste of the CAP instead of making further empty gestures about reforming an archaic institution which the Minister, and others before him, have been trying in vain to reform for years and years?

Mr. MacGregor: To answer all the hon. Gentleman's questions would require a lengthy debate. Yes, I agree that we have to deal with the grain surpluses, and important steps have been taken in this price package. The average support level for cereals will be reduced by about 10 per cent. It is not just a European problem; it is a worldwide problem. There are big surpluses elsewhere. India and China are now exporting cereals. Therefore, the problem must be dealt with on an international basis, hence the importance of the GATT talks. It would not be fair to British farmers to achieve complete containment when others continue to produce substantial surpluses and sell them on the world market.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, overall, the British farmer makes very little contribution to EEC surpluses and that if any surpluses

accrue from this country they accrue mainly from cereal farmers, not from dairy farmers? In any reform that he is envisaging for the CAP, will my right hon. Friend give serious consideration to the position of the small dairy farmer, who is vital to so many parts of the rural community? Dairy farmers are a binding feature of the rural community. Without them, there would be nobody to manage our countryside.

Mr. MacGregor: We have given serious consideration, and we shall continue to do so, to the position of the small farmer, including the small dairy farmer. However, my hon. Friend is deluding himself if he thinks that we are not contributing to the surpluses and to the costs. We have to accept that we are making a contribution to the cereals surplus and also to the substantial supplies of butter and skimmed milk powder that are held in intervention stores.

Mr. John: The Minister has told us about his aims but not about his proposals for the reduction and the eventual disappearance of surpluses. Does he favour price reduction, set-aside, quotas or a two-tier price system? Will he consider setting out in a White Paper his proposals for the negotiation of the disappearance of these surpluses.

Mr. MacGregor: Yesterday the hon. Gentleman called for a debate, and if there is to be a debate that might be the appropriate time to go into all these matters. Yes, I believe that there needs to be price restraint; yes, I believe that set aside, in some form or another, will have a part to play, and we are pursuing that aim; and no, I do not believe in two-tier pricing policies of the kind produced by the alliance, as they would be inimical to British farming interests. Earlier this year we published a major document that set out the broad outlines of our policy.

Milk Quotas

7. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received any recent representations about the allocation of milk quota between landlords and tenants.

Mr. Gummer: From time to time I receive comments on the operation of the current arrangements, and some organisations have discussed landlord-tenant issues in response to this Department's recent request for views on the future of the quota system.

Mr. Ashdown: Is the Minister aware of the deep concern that is felt in the National Farmers Union and other circles about the pressure that is being put on tenants by landlords who have received planning permission as a result of the relaxed regulations and who are seeking to remove tenants, either by making them offers that they cannot refuse, or, more worryingly, by putting down uncontestable eviction orders? What does the Minister intend to do to conserve and maintain milk quotas and also farmers' livelihoods?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right to say that the Government are greatly concerned to conserve milk quotas and the livelihoods that depend on them. If he can give specific cases of the harassment to which he referred we shall, of course, examine them carefully. However, until this moment, that has not been one of the major concerns expressed to us. We have been anxious to get a reasonable balance between the natural interests of both tenants and landlords.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my right hon. Friend also examine the position of landlords and tenants on the whole question of the sale of milk quotas? Does he not agree that the way in which milk quota is increasing in price is causing grave concern, and will he assure us that the Government will take measures to stop the sale of milk quotas?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend might remember that when we first introduced milk quotas a universal demand of the farming industry was that milk quotas should be transferable, both by leasing and by sale. It was because of that that we allowed the arrangements to work as they do. Indeed, we have sought more flexibility and I think that our demand for greater flexibility for leasing will go some way towards meeting my hon. Friend's anxiety. It must be remembered that the price of milk quotas is part of the market rather than something that can be determined by Government diktat.

Beef

8. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to the European Community about the structure of the proposed new European Community beef regime, due in 1987.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The decisions on the reform of the beef regime were made during the United Kingdom presidency last December and came into effect in April. Our market prices have risen since then, while our producers benefit from the variable premium and suckler cow premium at increased rates.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Minister accept that, notwithstanding the devaluation of the green pound and developments in the beef sector this week, the beef producers of this country still feel hard pressed and are still subject to unfair competition, particularly from the Irish Republic? Will he confirm that this most recent devaluation gives further scope for increases in the hill livestock compensatory allowances and in the suckler cow premium? If those increases were made would that not solve some of the problems to which the Minister referred and considerably benefit beef producers in my constituency and in other less-favoured areas?

Mr. Thompson: The less-favoured areas are always on our minds primarily because I live in one. The suckler cow premium has increased by £8.60 and we shall, of course, examine that again. The variable premium returns about £51, which cannot be bad and the Irishman, who was collecting £63.70 on a side of beef is now collecting £22.60, and I am sure that he will not be pleased about that.

Mr. Key: I think that my hon. Friend has particular expertise on the subject of the European meat trade. Will he examine urgently the problems facing a large number of slaughterhouses, which appear to be the subject of a positively Japanese-style campaign from Brussels to prevent the abattoirs from exporting meat to the European Community? That is having a consequential effect on the butchers in our high streets.

Mr. Thompson: I do not think that butchers in our high streets and export slaughterhouses are all that closely connected. However, I would not countenance any meat being exported from this country that had not been

handled in the most hygienic of premises. The same inspectors tour the whole of Europe and America to inspect slaughterhouses. There is room for improvement in many of our slaughterhouses, although a large proportion of them are of the very highest quality.

Mr. Rogers: For the past half hour we have heard about nothing but surpluses in beef, dairy and other agricultural produce and the Government's lack of ability to reform the common agricultural policy. May I suggest that one way of solving the problem would be for the Government to shut down some of the farms, just as they have shut down the pits and the factories?

Mr. Thompson: We heard my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) say earlier that when the CAP started there were 22 million farmers and now there are 7 million. That is a significant reduction.

Radioactive Contamination

9. **Mr. Alton** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest levels of contamination resulting from the Chernobyl fall-out in grass in areas under restriction for movement of sheep, compared with June 1986.

Mr. Gummer: The latest progress report on a survey of Cumbrian vegetation commissioned by the Ministry from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology indicates a substantial decrease in contamination levels over the last 12 months. I have placed a copy of the report in the Library of the House.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful for that reply, but may I ask how many hectares of land continue to be contaminated, and how much longer it will be before that land can again be used for grazing? Will the Minister continue to provide compensation this year? How much compensation has already been paid out? Does he not agree that his Department's initial response was extraordinarily complacent, given the events that have followed?

Mr. Gummer: No, I certainly do not think that. We were very much faster off the mark than any other country in Europe, provided much more generous compensation than any other country in Europe, have done very well by the farmers in those circumstances and shall continue to do so. The hon. Gentleman ought to stop whingeing about an extremely well-run policy. It is not a question of the acres of land that are covered, but of the number of sheep that have been affected. Four hundred thousand sheep are still affected, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that up to now we have spent £4,347,097 on compensation and that there is still opportunity for compensation to be paid.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What about this contamination getting into food? Is it not true that while Britain allows exports of food containing 1,000 Bq per kilo, it prevents imports of goods with more than 600 Bq? Is not the inconsistency in that position the reason why the Kuwaitis, the Egyptians, the Israelis, the Iranians, the Philipinos, the Malaysians and the people of Hong Kong and Singapore have returned shipments of British food exports to the United Kingdom over the last month? Is that not an inconsistency in our position?

Mr. Gummer: I hope that it will not be considered improper if I say that I would prefer to rely upon expertise in Britain than on expertise in many of the countries

mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. The standards imposed in this country are clearly advised by our scientists to make the food consumed here and for export entirely safe. We stand by that.

Mr. Home Roberston: Does not the Minister's initial reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) indicate that the Government do not feel that it will be necessary to maintain the movement restrictions for much longer? Following the Prime Minister's written reply to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) on 30 June, can the Minister say what staff and resources will be deployed by his Department on long-term contingency plans to deal with the ever-increasing risk of nuclear accidents, either in this country or further afield?

Mr. Gummer: With respect, the hon. Gentleman's last comment was somewhat tendentious. Whether or not the risk is ever-increasing, we have said that will employ the staff and resources that are necessary. We are looking carefully at the way in which we will respond in the future and are trying to learn the lessons that we ought to learn from what has happened in the past.

I do not want to prognosticate on when the movement restrictions will be lifted entirely. They will be lifted as and when it is entirely safe to do so, and we have a very high margin of safety, as this is a matter affecting food. That is why I can say with such confidence to the hon. Member for Worthington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that this country puts the safety of people, both here and abroad, first.

Green Pound

10. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to press for a substantial devaluation of the green pound; and if he will make a statement.

12. **Mr. Speller** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on progress on the European Community negotiations on the proposed devaluations of the green pound.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier.

Mr. Bruce: I acknowledge that the Minister secured a 7 per cent. devaluation for beef as against a 5.5 per cent. general devaluation, but does he not acknowledge that the Irish secured a 2.8 per cent. devaluation? Given that they are the major competitors in the beef regime, does that not mean that the gap is still too disadvantageous? The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has already said how important dairying is to underpin the rural economy in his area. Will the Minister acknowledge that that is also true of the beef industry in my constituency and many others, and what will he do to bring that industry into profit?

Mr. MacGregor: Not only is our beef sector affected by the green rate devaluation that was secured—although it was well above that of the Irish—but, MCAs for beef will fall because the Commission will be reducing the percentage of the intervention price used to calculate MCAs from 85 to 80 per cent.—a significant move in the direction that we were seeking. We pressed for that, and it was another of the changes that we obtained in the price package, which was advantageous to Britain. That means that the net MCA payment on Irish sides will go

down from about £27.80 to £22.60, which is almost a cut of 19 per cent. That is a considerable improvement on December 1986, when the equivalent figure was £63.

Mr. Speller: I take the point that my right hon. Friend has made, but will he accept that the British farmer, who is as patriotic as the next man, entirely accepts the need for reform and devaluations, but does not understand why it always seems that the minimum amount that he receives is not sufficient to restore him to a reasonable livelihood? He is looking to the Government for rather more help than he has received.

Mr. MacGregor: Within the Community we have fought hard for legitimate British interests and we have been very successful. I entirely understand what my hon. Friend has said and I should like to see a satisfactory solution for farmers. We must face the fact that we have substantial surpluses. In some senses we are facing the penalties of the success that farmers have had in hugely increasing production. Therefore, that means that we shall have to reduce the costs of surpluses and face up to some agricultural land coming out of production, hence the importance of the other initiatives that we are now taking.

Mr. MacLennan: What are the prospects of the Minister supporting the entry into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system within the next financial year? It will give farmers some relief from the constant fluctuations, which are hitting our farmers harder than others.

Mr. MacGregor: I think that the hon. Gentleman is well aware of our position on the EMS. Membership of the EMS has no automatic effect on green rates. It is the panacea that some people seem to be chasing all the time, but it does not exist. Green rates will still be reviewed on each price level, and exceptionally at other times, whether we are in or out of that system.

Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance

11. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Since his appointment my right hon. Friend has yet to meet the president of the Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance, but they have agreed to meet as soon as mutually convenient.

Mr. Gregory: Does my hon. Friend agree that the greatest help that the Government could give to the confectionery industry in important centres such as York would be to re-rate confectionery in line with foods, to boost employment?

Mr. Thompson: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his persistence in putting forward the confectionery industry's case. We had long discussions during the election—and they will continue—about VAT and its various impositions. All that I can do is repeat what my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal said the other day, that the Prime Minister has said that we have no intention of imposing VAT on food, gas, electricity, young children's clothes and shoes.

Mr. Tony Banks: Enough of all this sweet talk; it will not butter any parsnips. When do the Government intend

to introduce legislation that requires producers of these sticky comestibles to put a health warning on them so that people will know that they destroy their teeth and do their hearts in?

Mr. Thompson: If the hon. Gentleman takes the trouble to read what is written on a packet of the sweets that he so liberally gives away to his family and friends he will see that a great deal of information appears on the packet. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that discussions are continuing on how that information can best be clarified so that people know exactly what they are purchasing and have freedom of choice.

Milk Quotas

13. Mr. Knox asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to have discussions with the European Community Council of Ministers about the operation of milk quotas.

Mr. Gummer: This item is not at present specifically on the agenda of any Council meeting, but in its discussion of price fixing this week the Council has been considering several issues relating to the quota system.

Mr. Knox: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the deep resentment that is felt by many British dairy farmers that New Zealand imports are included in Britain's national quotas? How can he justify that, 14 years after we joined the Community?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend would not wish to mislead the House. In the fixing of the quotas between the countries of the Common Market, the fact that New Zealand had entry into our market was excluded from the arrangements and Britain received a smaller cut than about 40 per cent. of European producers, although we received a larger cut than another 40 per cent. However, New Zealand did not affect that at all.

Food Surpluses

14. Mr. Baldry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present cost to the European Economic Community of the storing and disposing of agricultural surpluses.

Mr. MacGregor: The 1987 Community budget provides for expenditure of 17,400 mecu—about £12,400 million—on the storage and disposal of agricultural products.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time that we started using resources to help farmers rather than simply wasting them on the storage and disposal of surpluses? Is it not time that we had a policy to reduce the Community budget and increase money for farmers?

Mr. MacGregor: There is no doubt that quite a bit of the support helps farm incomes. My hon. Friend will agree that when we talk about the unjustifiable element in the cost of the common agricultural policy we must remember that we are storing and disposing of surpluses on such a scale that it costs 50 per cent. of the community budget. That is why we want to bring it down.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Lloyd: I thank the Prime Minister for that reply. For eight years people in the inner cities have thought that she was the major part of the problem, so why should they believe her now when she says that she has changed?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that total expenditure on the urban programme in England increased from £93 million in 1978-79 to £324 million in 1987-88—a 73 per cent. increase in real terms. One of the difficulties about inner cities, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware, is that some councils are positively hostile to the private sector, which could solve their problems.

Mr. Lord: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the fundamental problem in terms of agricultural surpluses, particularly cereal surpluses, is how to reduce them quickly without seriously damaging farming interests in Britain? Since farmers have to plan ahead, and bearing in mind the problems in leaving the sorting out of milk to the last minute, will my right hon. Friend please urge on our partners in Europe the need to act quickly on this most important issue?

The Prime Minister: I have a feeling that my hon. Friend did not get in on questions that ended just before my own began, but I shall do my best to answer him. We have left a number of guidelines with the Commission. One of them involves how to reduce the amount of wheat that goes into intervention and reduce the surpluses, before we dispose of the surpluses. Instructions have been given to draw up guidelines in a regulation, but I am aware that farmers need some time to adjust to any new regime because of the inevitable time cycle involved in agricultural production.

Mr. Kinnock: On another type of inner city question, the 1985 insider dealing legislation made provision for two-year prison sentences. Does the Prime Minister think that a £25,000 fine and a suspended sentence is a punishment that adequately fits the crime?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is aware, as he indicated, that we were the first to make insider dealing a crime. The maximum penalty is two years' imprisonment, but there is a measure before the House that puts up the penalty to seven years. The right hon. Gentleman is also aware that it is Parliament's duty to ensure that the maximum penalty is available, but he knows full well that one is not able to comment on any particular sentence.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend will recall that during the general election we had high-minded sermons from the leaders of the Liberal and SDP parties talked about co-operation, goodwill and partnership. In view of their present behaviour towards each other—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to tell the hon. Member, and all new hon. Members, that questions to the Prime Minister must relate to her responsibilities and not to those of others.

Mr. Bennett: I was wondering whether my right hon. Friend could refer the two right hon. Members to a good marriage guidance counsellor or divorce lawyer.

The Prime Minister: I do not think that that is a matter for me.

Q2. Mr. Haynes asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Haynes: Does the Prime Minister agree with the statement that her Secretary of State for the Environment made last night in the debate on the Loyal Address? [HON. MEMBERS: "Which statement?"] If so, will she confirm that the worst off in our society will be far worse off with a vicious poll tax?

The Prime Minister: I would not agree that the worst off will be adversely affected. Most single people in houses, single pensioners and widows will be far better off under the community charge. The worst off will be those on supplementary benefit. The less worst off will get up to 80 per cent. rebate of the community charge. The worst off, in addition to an 80 per cent. rebate, will be on supplementary benefit — [Interruption.] The hon. Gentleman asked the question and I am giving him the courtesy of an answer. I ask that he do me the courtesy of listening. For the less well off there will be up to an 80 per cent. rebate of the community charge. For the worst off who are on supplementary benefit or income support, there will be an amount added to that income support or supplementary benefit equal to the average of the 20 per cent. that they would have to pay. So, they will not be adversely affected.

Q3. Mr. Evennett asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evennett: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the understandable concern of many in the community when people of ability leave to go abroad to work? Will she explain what steps are being taken by the Government to encourage people to stay and work here?

The Prime Minister: I agree that it is important that our very able scientists stay and work in this country. As my hon. Friend is aware, the recent report of the Royal Society showed that there is not a brain drain, but that there is a movement of scientists both ways. Some of our best scientists go overseas, but some very good ones come here. We are anxious that scientists should have excellent facilities in which to work. Therefore, we must consider setting up centres of excellence and multi-disciplinary laboratories in universities. We must also ensure that those scientists who are on high pay do not pay such high taxation, so that there is an incentive to move overseas, where taxation is infinitely lower.

Mr. Steel: Will the Prime Minister welcome efforts made by Business in the Community to encourage investment into inner city areas such as the London

borough of Tower Hamlets, which was visited by its president yesterday? Will she match its efforts and concerns by implementing the report of the Home Affairs Sub-Committee last year, which recommended that the Government should increase the housing allocation to that London borough?

The Prime Minister: I cannot give a direction that housing allocations to any particular borough should be increased. As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, it would be quite wrong if I could make arbitrary decisions of that kind. I join the right hon. Gentleman in welcoming the work of Business in the Community and the One Per Cent Club, the members of which give 1 per cent. of their profits to help the inner cities, particularly localities where factories are situated. It is a very good, enterprising set-up.

Mr. Mills: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our partners in the EEC still consider that London is the best possible location, and our country the best possible location, for the proposed EC trade mark office, and that that would be a great help in developing London's inner city, because the placing of that important European institution in Britain would result in 2,000 to 3,000 jobs?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, we think that London would be the best site for the Community trade mark office and we have put in a bid at a site which we think is most likely to receive favourable consideration—St. Katherine's dock—and we have been prepared to back our bid with generous financial support. There are bids from three other cities—Madrid, The Hague and Munich. The Foreign Affairs Council will have to make the final decision. Naturally, we think that London would be the best.

Q4. Mr. Skinner asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Prime Minister recall that on 24 March 1981 Mr. Speaker gave a ruling during the passage of a Bill to the effect that, if Members of Parliament had any doubts whatever about pecuniary interests arising out of the passage of a Bill, they should not vote on that matter? In view of all the publicity surrounding the poll tax and the fact that she will benefit to the tune of £37 a week, will she abide by Mr. Speaker's ruling of 24 March 1981? Will she call upon all other members of the Tory Cabinet who will line their pockets to do the same, and, as a result of that, bring a bit of decency into this poll tax legislation?

The Prime Minister: Well, Mr. Speaker, in view of what the hon. Gentleman has said, I wonder who he thinks will vote on Members' pay.

Q5. Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adley: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members welcome the Government's determination to try to resuscitate commercial life in the inner cities? Does she agree that that problem could partly be solved at the same time as dealing with the problem of over-development in areas such as mine if the Government would simply consider providing tax incentives to

developers to develop in the inner cities while at the same time considering tax penalties on developers who insist on trying to develop on green field sites in the prosperous south, where there are environmental problems?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, there are tax incentives on rates in the enterprise zones and planning incentives in the enterprise zones and in the urban development corporations. These are designed to act as incentives to people to set up there. It would not be right to put a tax penalty on businesses which choose to develop elsewhere. They must develop where it is commercially sound to do so, provided that they can obtain planning permission, which, I think, is one of the problems in my hon. Friend's area. That is a matter for the local area first and for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in an appeal instance.

Q6. Mrs. Clwyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Clwyd: Given the serious errors that have occurred in the reading of cervical cytology slides in the Liverpool area, where 487 women have had to be recalled for further treatment or tests, what assurances can the Prime Minister give to women all over the country that they can have faith in the screening procedures? Will she set up an independent inquiry into the cancer screening system?

The Prime Minister: No. I do not think that it is necessary to set up an independent inquiry. I am aware of the accidents described by the hon. Lady. We should not condemn the whole system simply because there have been some mistakes. We should consider the mistakes, which, of course, caused great distress. I understand that the matter is to be put right as soon as the incidents can be reconsidered and re-examined.

Sir Peter Hordern: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the common agricultural policy represents a growing threat to the stability of the European Community, which many of us support? Does she also accept that the right approach to the matter is to adopt the good shopkeeping attitude suggested to us by Napoleon—who is rather better known than Monsieur Chirac—who called us a nation of good shopkeepers? Will she suggest that that attitude should be adopted more widely by our partners in the European Community?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I think that my hon. Friend is absolutely right. Expenditure on the common agricultural policy totally unbalances the entire budget. Most of that expenditure goes, not to farmers, but to maintaining or disposing of surpluses. The whole Community budget is 33 billion ecu a year, of which 17 billion ecu go either to maintaining surpluses or to disposing of them. Because of that, we are trying to persuade our partners to our point of view, which is good shopkeeping and good housekeeping.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 6 JULY—Debate on a Government motion on the future of the *Today* newspaper until 7 o'clock, followed by

Second Reading of the Local Government Bill.

TUESDAY 7 JULY—Motion on the Northern Ireland Act 1974 (Interim Period of Extension) Order, followed by motion on the Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order and motion on the Northern Ireland Electricity Supply (Amendment) Order.

Afterwards motion on the Jury Trial (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order.

WEDNESDAY 8 JULY—Second Reading of the Finance Bill.

Motion on the Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order.

Motion on the Channel Tunnel Bill.

At Ten o'clock the Question will be put on all outstanding Estimates.

THURSDAY 9 JULY—Second Reading of the British Shipbuilders (Borrowing Powers) Bill followed by Second Reading of the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Bill.

FRIDAY 10 JULY—Debate on a motion for the Adjournment of the House entitled "The Importance of Quality in Manufacturing to International Competitiveness".

MONDAY 13 JULY—Motion for the Summer Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill.

The House will wish to know, Mr. Speaker, that subject to the progress of business it will be proposed that the House should rise for the Summer Adjournment on Friday 24 July until Wednesday 21 October.

Mr. Kinnock: I know that I speak on behalf of the whole House when I say that I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his statement. I welcome the right hon. Gentleman to his new position. We hope that he will show the same very original mode of thought—the description that the Prime Minister used—as that shown by his predecessor, regardless of the jeopardy which that imposes on his future career.

I also welcome the concession made by the Government to our call for a debate on the future of the *Today* newspaper. Does the right hon. Gentleman share the public concern about the fact that another takeover by Mr. Rupert Murdoch does nothing but further diminish choice and the freedom of the press in our country as well as showing the Government's contempt for the procedures that provide for the reference of newspaper purchases to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

The Leader of the House will be aware that an all-party early-day motion about televising the proceedings of the House has attracted a very large number of signatures. May we have the right hon. Gentleman's assurance that there will be an early debate not only on the principle of televising our proceedings but on the best method by

which that experiment can proceed? I know that the right hon. Gentleman's personal disagreement with the proposal to televise our proceedings will not in any way impede his anxiety to ensure that we have a fair debate on the subject.

Will the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent statement on the announcement yesterday that the Government intend to diminish the role of the National Economic Development Council? He will know that NEDC, which was established by a previous Conservative Government, provides the regular main opportunity for dialogue between the leaders of both sides of industry. In yesterday's announcement, was there not further evidence that we have a Government who hold such co-operation in contempt?

In view of the 52 per cent. increase in crime in the past eight years and the fact that yesterday's report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis showed that the Met is just one of the police forces in Britain suffering from what Commissioner Newman called the lack of "basic policy requirement", will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on police force staffing levels in Britain?

The right hon. Gentleman will know that it is now seven years since the Education Act 1981 relating to special needs was passed. Is he familiar with the recent Select Committee report on the operation of the Act and the conclusion that it reached that the working of the Act has been restricted, as the Select Committee put it, by the lack of resources and the absence of "clear coherent" policy by the Government? Will the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent debate on that most important topic well before the Cabinet begin consideration of next year's public expenditure proposals?

The right hon. Gentleman will know that, for the past four years, some of the conventions and procedures in the House have been amended to take account of the rather special relationship that has existed between the Liberals and the Social Democratic party. In view of the apparent change that is taking place in that relationship, does the Leader of the House envisage any further amendments to our procedures and conventions to take account of the pending democratic diffusion?

Mr. Wakeham: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his kind words at the beginning of his remarks. Slow as my shorthand was, I think that I got the points about which he asked. I shall seek to answer them in the order in which he asked them.

I do not accept for a minute the right hon. Gentleman's strictures about the *Today* newspaper, but I recognise the Opposition's concern. I have arranged the debate on Monday so that the Opposition can express their fears and the Government can put what I believe to be a strong case for their position.

I am sure that we shall be able to arrange a debate on televising the proceedings of the House. Discussions will take place through the usual channels as to the best form in which we can arrange it. I certainly will not allow my views to dominate the issue, and they would not be allowed to do so even if I wanted them to.

Neddy is relevant to today's debate. No doubt the Chancellor of the Exchequer will have something to say about it. In any case, I shall refer the Leader of the Opposition's points to him.

We had a debate on crime earlier in the week when many of the issues were raised. I cannot promise the right hon. Gentleman that I can shortly arrange another debate.

On the matter of the SDP and the Liberals, we shall have to watch how the situation develops. No doubt the usual channels will be able to discuss matters as the situation changes.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): My right hon. Friend's promotion will have been received with widespread approbation by the House. Will he give an assurance, which I imagine is sought on both sides of the House, that the six-month delay which preceded the setting up of Select Committees at the beginning of the last Parliament will not be matched by a similar delay on this occasion which would represent a serious and unnecessary waste of resources?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern on both sides of the House to get on with setting up the Select Committees as soon as possible. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the work that he and many others have done on Select Committees. Discussions are taking place through the usual channels. The setting up of Select Committees takes a little time, but we shall do it as quickly as we can.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Can the Leader of the House arrange for a statement next week on Manchester's applications for Government support for a light rapid transport system? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the crucial importance of that project for the regeneration of the inner city of Manchester?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot give the right hon. Gentleman an undertaking, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I ask my right hon. Friend for an early statement on the rights of tenants in council accommodation, bearing in mind Ealing council's decision to take away tenancies from anyone accused of racism, simply on the basis of the accusation, whether the person is guilty or not?

Mr. Wakeham: It seems to me that that is a suitable subject for my hon. Friend to raise in the Summer Adjournment debate next week.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): May I associate my right hon. and hon. Friends with the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming the Leader of the House to his new job? I also thank his predecessor, who showed characteristic generosity, courtesy and civility not just to us but to hon. Members throughout the House. We hope that that will be extended to everyone in future by the Leader of the House.

Can the right hon. Gentleman give the House any guidance about when the new Select Committees will be established? Is it his intention to re-establish the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

Mr. Wakeham: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks to me, and particularly his kind remarks to my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who held my post before me. I know that that feeling is shared by everybody in the House.

I cannot add anything further to what I have said to my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd). We shall get on with setting up the Select Committees as soon as we can.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Does my right hon. Friend recollect that, shortly before the previous Parliament terminated, the Select Committee on the Environment produced a report on historic buildings and ancient monuments? Has he noticed that the organisation called English Heritage has described it as one of the most important reports on the man-made environment for many years, and has said that it should provide debate for some years to come. Could that debate start with an early debate in the House.

Mr. Wakeham: That is a good subject for debate. I shall see what can be done, but I cannot promise a debate in the immediate future.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): May I draw attention to early-day motion 8?

[That this House, in the light of recent reports of child sexual abuse issuing from Cleveland and elsewhere, recalls with acute concern the claims registered by Incest Crisis Line, supported by many other agencies both statutory and voluntary, that children subjected to sexual abuse are the source of 90 per cent. of all rapists, 30 per cent. of all rape victims, 40 per cent. of alcoholics, 40 per cent. of drug addicts, 30 per cent. of children in care, 75 per cent. of female and almost 100 per cent. of male prostitutes; notes with extreme anxiety the total lack of co-ordination between bodies charged with a statutory responsibility for providing safeguards and ensuring justice in these matters; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to fund the resourcing of agencies specialising in proper counter-measures and to establish, as a matter of urgency, a Royal Commission to receive evidence to establish the true scale of child sexual abuse and make proposals for legislative measures designed specifically to ensure a framework of true justice for everyone, genuine remedial provision for the culprit and, above all, protection and fairness for the child victims.]

The motion was submitted last Thursday by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook). More than 100 hon. Members have signed it. In view of the importance of the issue and the fact that it has been announced to the House that the recess will begin on 24 July, will the Leader of the House consider giving time to discussing that most important matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the importance of the matter, but my hon. Friend the Minister for Health expects to receive reports early next week from the Northern regional health authority and from the social services inspectorate team, which at his request is examining the situation in Cleveland. In the light of those reports, the Government will decide what further action may be needed and what form it should take. I think that I had better not deal with anything in the House until I have received that information.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As we know, my right hon. Friend is a generous and charitable man, and, as he knows, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) is an exceedingly ambitious man. As the latter is now a captain without a ship, and as he now does not have the prospect of a hung Parliament before him, can my right hon. Friend do the decent thing and find a way for the right hon. Gentleman to join the Conservative Party?

Mr. Wakeham: I think that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport has work enough on his hands at the moment, and we will leave it to him.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that there is an urgent need for a complete Government boycott of all the products of Eli Lilly, the firm that manufactured Opren, because that firm has paid compensation to people in the United States who were damaged but has refused to pay one penny to the British people who were appallingly damaged by the same drug? As the British Government are involved in that great drug disaster as a result of accepting and agreeing to that drug by registering it, may we have an early debate, and will the Leader of the House look at early-day motion 16?

[That this House notes that United States citizens who were seriously damaged by the medical drug Opren have been paid compensation by the pharmaceutical firm Eli Lilly; further notes that British victims suffering the same dreadful injuries after taking the same drug are refused compensation by the same firm, which is hiding behind the inadequacies of British law; calls upon Eli Lilly to pay the same compensation to British victims as to those in the United States of America; urges Her Majesty's Government to support this request; and, if it is rejected, to refuse all further National Health Service contracts with Eli Lilly, and to boycott its products where alternative suppliers are available.]

Mr. Wakeham: As the right hon. Gentleman himself recognised, the Government are a party to legal proceedings that are before the courts and it would be wrong of me to say anything on the subject at this stage.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): My right hon. Friend will know that the Foreign Affairs Committee of this House today produced a most important, constructive and elegant report on Cyprus. May I ask him that the matter not be subsumed in a debate on foreign affairs but that a special debate be set aside so that this urgent matter, about which Britain has deep concerns, can be debated properly?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the importance of the subject and the report, but the first thing for me to do is to talk to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs about the matter.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): Will the Leader of the House give an assurance that a debate will be held on the Defence Estimates before the House goes into recess?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a debate on defence before the House goes into recess, but I promise that there will be a debate soon after we come back.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, following representations from right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, there is great concern about the unfairnesses suffered by dairy farmers and others because of the iniquities in the compensation for coal mining subsidence? Is he aware that the Waddilove committee was set up some four years ago, and that that committee's recommendations languished within the Department of Energy? Will he use his best endeavours to ensure that the House debates the recommendations of the Waddilove committee at the earliest possible moment?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly refer that matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. I wonder whether my hon. Friend might use the opportunity of the Summer Adjournment debate to raise it.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Before the House launches into yet another examination of the inadvisability of televising its proceedings—

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My hon. Friend would be on every day.

Mr. Faulds: Some of us would be better stars than others. Will the hon. Gentleman—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman needs any prompting.

Mr. Faulds: I am relieved, Sir. Will the right hon. Gentleman seriously consider providing an audio Green Paper containing recordings of some of the previous proceedings of the House to show how appallingly the media handle what happens here? They choose the punch-up and the rudery instead of the hours of serious debate.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly take note of what the hon. Gentleman says. I cannot help recalling that some years ago he and I toured New Zealand together, and every night there appeared to be a repeat of "Lorna Doone" in which he starred regularly.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): May I reiterate the request that I made to my right hon. Friend's predecessor just before the election for a debate in prime time about AIDS in the not too distant future? I understand that it will be difficult because of the recess, but it is a serious and important matter which affects the whole country. It is important to have regular updating of the Government's position on the problem.

Mr. Wakeham: I fully recognise the importance of the matter, but I want a little time in which to think about when we can have a debate on it.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to study early-day motion 32 in the name of my hon. Friends and myself?

[That this House notes with dismay the absence of the Secretary of State for Wales, the Right honourable Member for Worcester, from the Chamber of the House for the debate on the Queen's Speech on Monday 29th June, particularly in view of the subject of that day's debate, namely, 'The Social and Economic Divisions of the Nations and Regions of Britain'; further notes that he only entered the Chamber to listen to the speech of the Right honourable Member for Henley on the inner cities' needs and that he preferred to spend time talking to Tory colleagues from English constituencies, rather than give attention to a major debate on disparities within Britain; and concludes that he has as little interest in Wales as had the Prime Minister in appointing him to his present post.]

If the right hon. Gentleman has had an opportunity to study the motion, will he arrange time for an early debate on its contents in view of the fact that the Prime Minister has refused my request to discuss with her the nature of this ministerial appointment and the constitutional crisis that it provokes in this House and in Wales?

Mr. Wakeham: I know that representatives of the ministerial team from the Welsh Office were on the Bench for most of that debate. In my view, the appointment of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) can do nothing but good for the Principality of Wales. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that

what matters is not whether a person has this or that background but the way in which he does his job. I know that my right hon. Friend will do his job very well indeed.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): In view of the many demands for debates in parliamentary time that my right hon. Friend receives, is he aware that some of us consider it a complete waste of parliamentary time to debate a clapped-out newspaper with a minor circulation? If the Opposition were so fussed, why did he not tell them to use a Supply day?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend would perhaps best make his trenchant points in the debate next Monday if he should catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate, preferably before the recess, on the cash crisis faced by Edinburgh university and other Edinburgh further education establishments? Is he aware of the plight of further education as a result of Government policy?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's strictures, nor can I undertake to find Government time for a debate. However, there are other times in the parliamentary timetable between now and the recess when he should find an opportunity to make the points that he wishes to make.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Despite the past and personal misgivings of my right hon. Friend on the question of broadcasting, I hope that he will understand that some Conservative Members support representations from all parties for it and, indeed, that many hon. Members from all parties have signed the early-day motion standing in my name. Will he therefore consider favourably the question of a debate before the summer recess on the basis that it is wholly unreasonable that the proceedings of the House may be listened to, read and viewed, but may not be seen on television?

Mr. Wakeham: Those are powerful arguments, but I do not see a chance to have a proper structured debate before the summer recess. I hope that my hon. Friend will not get me a reputation for stubbornness too early in my term of office.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Will the Leader of the House state when the next meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee will take place and give an assurance that there will be no changes in the membership of that Committee? Given that the Conservative party is a minority party in Scotland, will he accept the evidence of his predecessor that we cannot go on as before with a minority party governing Scottish affairs?

Mr. Wakeham: This is a United Kingdom Parliament, the Conservative party has a substantial majority and we shall proceed very much as before. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the undertaking that he requests.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Is my right hon. Friend aware that during the election campaign one of the most serious complaints was against the standing charges for telephones, gas, electricity and water? Certainly they are affecting elderly persons. Is it not time to have a debate on whether the standing charges are desirable or, indeed, can be sustained?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend should perhaps try his luck in the Summer Adjournment debate next week.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): In view of the serious public disquiet in Liverpool and elsewhere at the mistakes made in cervical cancer screening in that city, is it not time that we had a statement from the Secretary of State so that there could be both a short debate and some restoration of public confidence in this service which is vital to more than half the population?

Mr. Wakeham: Naturally, I share with the hon. Gentleman his deep understanding of the importance of these matters, but I cannot add anything to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in answer to questions this afternoon.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Will my right hon. Friend give some further details about the surprise motion on the Channel tunnel which is to be debated next week? Is he aware that the opposition to this misguided, underwater white elephant has now been reinforced by the arrival of my hon. Friends the Members for Dover (Mr. Shaw) and for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and other hon. Members and that we may therefore need more time to debate these issues, and particularly the question why the Department of Transport has suppressed all its traffic forecasts on the Channel tunnel—presumably to help Eurotunnel publicise its much more optimistic forecast?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend may not have got the situation quite right, because the motion asks that the Lords message of 7 May be considered. Therefore, there has been a little time.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Given the Leader of the House's reservations about televising our proceedings in the Chamber, with which even ardent advocates of such a scheme who have been here just one week may begin to sympathise, will he consider the Select Committee on Sound Broadcasting recommendations that, at least initially, Select Committees should be televised? Will he provide time for a debate on that matter?

Mr. Wakeham: That is one way in which the House may decide to proceed. It will be up to the House to decide when we have had a proper debate and have considered all the issues.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who want to see fresh investment in the north are becoming increasingly fed up with those who talk down the region? We would welcome an opportunity to debate the document "Regional Trends" and to draw attention to the real progress that has been made in the north-east in home ownership, new enterprise and self-employment.

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with my hon. Friend. I hope that before too long it will be possible to have a debate.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House acknowledge that it is significant that in the debate on the Gracious Speech, while welcoming back Ulster Members, none of the Ministers who wound up the debate each day referred to any of the Ulster contributions? Although in the coming week there is a day for a debate on Northern Ireland issues, most of it is under Order in Council and, therefore, we cannot suggest amendments. Would it be possible to have a debate in the near future so that we can get off this siding into which we have been shunted and can become part of this Parliament and part of the nation? Will it be possible to have a debate

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

in the near future on the concept of federalism arising out of the way that the nation has now voted to give regions a greater say?

Mr. Wakeham: Of course I welcome the greater part that Ulster Members are playing in the House. However, I cannot offer the hon. Gentleman the debate that he wants in the near future.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Will my right hon. Friend consider making Government time available to introduce legislation so that the people who voted Liberal and SDP at the general election can have a referendum about whether they might want to change their vote now that they have been sold what is clearly a false prospectus? They were told that there would be some great alliance, unity, coalition. They have been sold a pup and need to have an opportunity to change their minds so that they can see the sham for which they voted.

Mr. Wakeham: In my constituency people thought that the alliance was a building society! I am afraid that there is no chance of a debate next week.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early statement by the Home Secretary about the directions by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on peaceful demonstrations outside the South African embassy? This morning I and three of my hon. Friends, after negotiations with a senior police officer, were allowed peacefully to demonstrate on the pavement immediately adjacent to the South African embassy while other citizens were arrested for attempting to exercise the same right.

In order to avoid any allegations that there is one law for Members of Parliament and another law for everybody else, would it not be in the best interests of all concerned for the Home Secretary to use his position as the police authority for the Metropolitan police to ensure that all citizens are given equal rights of peaceful protest outside that embassy against the evil apartheid regime in South Africa?

Mr. Wakeham: Obviously, I am not able to comment on that. However, I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that next Monday's debate on the effects of a merger of major publicity organs would be the appropriate moment for the House to debate the possible effects of a merger between the SDP and the Liberal party; or would my right hon. Friend be prepared to undertake in the public interest a reference of the possible merger of the SDP and the Liberal party to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

Mr. Wakeham: Their market share may be rather too low for such a reference. Whether the speech that my hon. Friend wishes to make on Monday will be in order is not a matter for me.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Does the Leader of the House accept that many of us in the Opposition do not agree with the Prime Minister's contention that London is the best location for the European trade mark office, and that a constituency with high unemployment such as mine ought to have been

considered for its location? Will he arrange for an early statement on this matter so that the outrage of my constituents can be given expression in this Chamber, because my constituents have once again been ignored by the Prime Minister, who does not give a damn about the north of England?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot accept the strictures of the hon. Gentleman on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I do not think that I can add anything to the statement that she made during Prime Minister's Question Time.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. Friend ensure, in the light of our neglect of our archaeological heritage—which is a most important part of our tourist trade—that a Minister from the Department of the Environment who is responsible for our archaeological heritage will be present for tomorrow's debate on tourism to answer points raised by Back Benchers?

Mr. Wakeham: I can confirm that the debate tomorrow will be on tourism, and I shall see that the appropriate Ministers are here to listen to the contributions of my hon. Friend and others.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Is the Leader of the House aware how fortunate he is that all three Leicester seats are now represented by Labour Members, all of whom support the prodigious efforts of the excellent Labour-controlled council there? May I ask an uncontroversial question? Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an early debate on war crimes, and in particular on the refusal of the United Nations to open up the files that it recently discovered which show the personal complicity of Adolf Hitler in the holocaust, and which also reveal the activities of President Waldheim during the war?

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. and learned Gentleman believes the substance of his first question, he will believe anything, but I do not think for a minute that he does. As for his second question, I agree that it is a serious matter. Although I cannot offer Government time, I think that the hon. and learned Gentleman could chance his luck in the Summer Adjournment debate on Monday.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in the light of the recent election campaign, there is widespread concern about the regulations governing applications for postal votes, which seem to make it as hard as possible for anyone to exercise his democratic right. Will it be possible before the Summer Recess for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to make a statement on his findings on how the new regulations worked at the last election?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Banks: Notwithstanding the blighted thespian career of my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds)—

Mr. Faulds: A blighted parliamentarian now.

Mr. Banks:—and his refusal to accept the lifeline that the televising of Parliament would give him, does the Leader of the House accept that there is considerable support on both sides of the House for the televising of

Parliament? Would it not be most acceptable and advisable, if the Government cannot arrange a debate before the recess, for us to have some form of consultative paper so that, during their quiet and reflective moments during the three-month recess, hon. Members may think about coming back after the recess and voting in favour?

Mr. Wakeham: There is quite a lot of documentation about the issue. I have no doubt that it is a decisive issue on both sides of the House and within both parties, and I think that we shall need a proper structured debate, probably in the autumn.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Cringington): Has my right hon. Friend's attention been drawn to early-day motion 6 on the denial of war service credit to Overseas Civil Service pensioners?

[That this House deplores the fact that, alone among public service pensioners, those whose service was overseas cannot count pre-appointment war service towards their pensions; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to remedy this injustice to a dwindling group of elderly people whose working lives were spent in adverse conditions while dedicated to the service of British interests overseas.]

Does he agree that this situation is disgraceful and ought to be remedied? Overseas Civil Service pensioners administered the Empire, but they are treated worse than the meanest little scribblers in the Home Civil Service. Should not the Government remedy this injustice immediately?

Mr. Wakeham: We recognise how strongly colonial service pensioners feel about the issue, and we are keeping it under careful review. However, there are many claims on public expenditure resources, and we have not so far been able to accommodate the extra commitment. I am sorry to disappoint my hon. Friend.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a full day ahead of us, with a large number of maiden speeches. I shall endeavour to call every hon. Member, but I ask for brief questions.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): May I return to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) about peaceful demonstration, not only in London but elsewhere? Will the Leader of the House examine the circumstances that prevail when petitions are presented at the door of No. 10 Downing street? My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and I went to extreme lengths to negotiate with Cannon Row police station and No. 10 to present a petition at 11 o'clock this morning, a time set by No. 10. However, when we arrived with the people who were petitioning the Prime Minister, the police—obviously acting on instructions from No. 10—kept us waiting for a very long time, and then told us that no one was to be allowed into Downing street. When they were telling us that, almost every representative of the press, both inside and outside—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman want a debate on the matter?

Mr. Ewing: No, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must stick to the convention, which is to ask for a debate next week.

Mr. Ewing: I am not asking for a debate next week. I am asking the Leader of the House to come back next

week and make a statement on the circumstances prevailing when arrangements have been made for the presentation of a petition. Petitioning is still part of the democratic process in this country, and No. 10 Downing street ought not to try to frustrate it in any way.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall see to it that the hon. Gentleman's representations, along with those of his hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West, (Mr. Canavan) are put to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. We shall see how we go from there.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Leader of the House has already listened graciously to my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam). Sadly, he found himself unable to give a firm commitment—although I can understand his caution—about a debate on the subject of child abuse until he has received the results of the inquiry now taking place. However, will he bear in mind that this is not just a Cleveland problem, but one that concerns the entire United Kingdom? Will he give the House an assurance today that, when he and his colleagues have received the results of the inquiry, those results will be made available to the House for consideration?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the importance of the matter, and that it does not relate only to Cleveland; there is concern about it in many parts of the country. However, I do not think that I should go any further than to discuss the matter with the Minister responsible before deciding what to do.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Did the Leader of the House hear the careful and legalistic words of the director of finance for Lothian region on "The World this Weekend" to the effect that, in his professional opinion, at least 90 statutory instruments would be needed for the implementation of the poll tax in Scotland? Next week, had we not better start on the 8,100 minutes of parliamentary time? My Scottish colleagues and I will go to the end of each separate statistic. Otherwise, would it not be better to have a quiet think over the summer and ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for example, how he will pay for the 70 full-time canvassers needed in Lothian region alone to keep an updated register? Should not the Government think about the mechanics of what they propose?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman always puts his points with great courtesy. However, I do not accept his strictures. We must see how we get along.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): May we have a statement next week from the Secretary of State for Transport on the axe that is currently hanging over the Settle to Carlisle railway? The railway is a very valuable facility, not only for the people of Bradford and west Yorkshire, but for those in a much wider area, but it has now been under threat of closure for four years. The Secretary of State says that it is a complicated case, but in fact it is very straightforward. The railway makes a profit, and it is an important trunk route and a valuable part of our heritage. The people want it to be saved. Will the Secretary of State come to the House next week and make a clear statement to the effect that this profitable service will be maintained for the people of Yorkshire?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): The Leader of the House will have seen early-day motion 5.

[That this House condemns the repression of the democracy and human rights in South Korea; supports the Opposition leaders, church spokesmen and students in their opposition to the present discredited government; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to make the strongest protest to the South Korean Government or else break off diplomatic relations until democracy and human rights are restored.]

It relates to democracy and human rights in South Korea. Matters have improved in the last few days, but will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to make representations to the Government of South Korea and ask for full democracy in South Korea and for the right of the opposition leaders, Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam, to campaign freely for the release of all political prisoners in that Fascist régime?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall see that the hon. Gentleman's concern is conveyed to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Energy to make a statement on the sale of National Coal Board houses at Calverley Creswell in my constituency several months ago, since many of the tenants are still unaware of who their landlords are, despite repeated requests in this House and elsewhere for the board to find out to whom it has sold those houses? Scores of tenants in that area are unable to find out who now owns their properties. Will he also bear in mind that it would show up the Government's legislation to sell off council estates in the light that we forecast many times: that if the board can sell off properties and six or nine months later people do not know who their landlords are, God knows what will happen when this Government get permission to sell off large council estates.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept for a moment the hon. Gentleman's strictures, or the points that he has made. However, I shall certainly refer his question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I assure the Leader of the House that the Labour party will not allow the Guinness affair to disappear during the summer recess. When will we have the interim report? Are we to get it? Is there to be a statement before the summer recess? In the light of the very lenient sentence that was imposed

yesterday on Mr. Collier, which was shameful and a disgrace to the British courts, may we have a debate before the recess on that matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a debate before the summer recess. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not the practice for Members of the Government to comment on matters that are before the courts. Nevertheless, I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's points to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Is the Leader of the House prepared to extend the scope of Monday's debate on the *Today* newspaper to include the crisis at *The Scotsman* newspaper where management and owners seem intent on turning a national institution into a regional rag?

Mr. Wakeham: Monday's debate will take place on a Government motion whose terms will be discussed through the usual channels.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Carthcart): In view of the Government's crushing defeat in Scotland on 11 June, is it not a gross insult to the people of Scotland that the first piece of major Scottish legislation should be tagged on to the end of the Local Government Bill? Would it not be better that this legislation, for which the Government have no mandate in Scotland, should be taken out of that Bill and that a separate Bill for Scotland should be published and put before the House?

Mr. Wakeham: However many times the hon. Gentleman repeats those remarks, the fact is that the Labour party lost the general election and that the Conservative party won it. The legislation that we are bringing before the House is good legislation, and I hope that it will be passed by a large majority.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The Leader of the House will obviously have to be taught who won the election in Scotland. Will he expand on the reply that he gave to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) about the composition of Scottish Committees? Will he accept it from me that the people of Scotland who have just elected 62 Opposition Members of Parliament and only 10 Tory Members of Parliament, will not tolerate the packing of Scottish Committees with English Tory Members?

Mr. Wakeham: The composition of the Committees is a matter that will be discussed through the usual channels. I have no doubt that we shall find a satisfactory solution to all our difficulties.

Prime Minister's Questions

4.16 pm

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising from Prime Minister's questions. During Prime Minister's questions you very rightly prevented one of my hon. Friends from raising a question concerning the problems in another political party, saying—quite correctly—that they were not of course within the responsibility of the Prime Minister. May I therefore take your advice on exactly how you see the Prime Minister's responsibility for a particular sentence passed by a particular judge in a particular court, because you did, after all, allow a question to be put on that matter?

Mr. Speaker: It is not unusual for questions of that kind to be put to the Front Bench. I listened carefully to the Prime Minister's reply, as I listened carefully to the reply of the Leader of the House on exactly the same matter.

Mr. Tebbit: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I did not ask for your advice on whether such questions were or were not usual. I asked for your advice on what was the responsibility of the Prime Minister, which was being questioned.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman has been here for a long time. It is perfectly in order to criticise or to question a sentence; but it is not in order to criticise a judge. That has to be done by motion.

Mr. Tebbit *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I can help the right hon. Gentleman further.

Mr. Tebbit: But I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will be able to help me because, as a Back Bencher, I would want to address questions to Ministers and I would want to be sure that, as I understand it, those questions might be addressed to a Minister, despite the fact that the Minister has no departmental responsibility and that there is no Government responsibility for the matter. Is that what you are telling me, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: I am telling the right hon. Gentleman what he knows very well: that in this Chamber, and in his presence when he was on the Front Bench, questions of this kind have been asked and have been answered.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that in the past 12 months the Prime Minister has replied to and commented upon penalties that have been imposed?

Mr. Speaker: I have no more to say on the matter. The whole House knows the rules. It is not in order to criticise a judge. That must be done by motion. However, it has always been in order to comment upon sentences.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It will delay the debate.

Mr. Skinner: My point of order relates to what has just happened. On leaving the Chamber the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who has just been questioning you, thinking that you were the BBC, muttered that he would deal with the matter in another way. I hope that you will be able to stand up to him in private as well as you have in public.

Mr. Speaker: It is a good thing that I do not hear everything that is said in this Chamber.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was sitting right next to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit). When he left the Chamber, he made no such remark as has just been alleged.

Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make about the arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill on Monday 13 July.

Hon. Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 9 am on Wednesday 8 July. A list showing the subjects and times will be published later that day. Normally the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise discretion and to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours. Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of Members to keep in touch with developments so that they do not lose their turn.

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the matter of the Queen's Speech and its effects on Wales, being a matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.
—[*Mr. Durant.*]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—[*Mr. Durant.*]

Question again proposed.

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[SIXTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [25 June]

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—[Mr. Churchill.]

Question again proposed.

National Resources

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and that I have also selected for Division at the end of the debate the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and his right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recollect that we raised the question of the selection of amendments on the first day of the debate and again yesterday. What recourse do we now have as a minority group of six Members to try to ensure that the House has an opportunity to divide on our amendments?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that under Standing Order No. 32 I am authorised to select only one amendment in addition to the amendment moved at the beginning of the debate. Therefore, there will be no further opportunity of a separate Division on the amendment tabled by the hon. Gentleman. He can, of course, exercise his vote in any way that he wishes at the end of the debate, but I am afraid that I cannot help him further.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be in order to ask for a 15 minutes' adjournment to allow the Leader of the Opposition to make a drafting amendment to his amendment to include a passage on whether the Government have a mandate to legislate for Scotland and Wales as, clearly, the fact that he did not include such a passage was an oversight on his part?

Mr. Speaker: That would certainly not be in order.

I must tell the House again today that a very large number of right hon. and hon. Gentlemen, including a large number of maiden speakers, wish to be called if time allows. Therefore, I again appeal to hon. Members for brief contributions.

4.21 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move, at the end of the Question, to add:

But humbly regret that the Gracious Speech consists of policies which, far from concentrating national resources on

the areas of greatest need and greatest potential economic growth, will further widen the divisions within society and neglect the services and industries which should be developed and expanded.

It is only right to warn intellectually fastidious new hon. Members of what they are likely to face as the afternoon wears on. In about 30 minutes' time, the Chancellor of the Exchequer will describe the state of the economy in language that makes St. John's revelation of the new Jerusalem sound like a confession of failure. I suppose that it is just possible that the Chancellor's normal style will be inhibited today by a sudden attack of integrity. However, assuming that, as usual, he is immune to that inconvenient virus, we know exactly what to expect. We shall be entertained by a series of carefully selected statistics, each one designed to give a false picture of the Government's records and the country's prospects.

At this task, the Prime Minister's record is even worse. She attempts to create the impression that her Government came to power bit by bit, assuming responsibility for various aspects of the economy at statistically convenient dates: manufacturing output, 1983; manufacturing investment, 1985; manufacturing productivity, 1979; economic growth, 1981; and public spending, 1982. All those figures with their relative and conflicting dates appear in one of the Prime Minister's speeches on one page of *Hansard*. The trick is never to reveal the Government's full eight-year record.

Among the statistics that the Chancellor will fail to quote as the afternoon proceeds are a number of indisputable facts. For example, we will not be told that since 1979 the British economy has expanded at the dismal annual average of 1.3 per cent. We will not be told that since 1979 capital investment in the British economy has increased by less than 1 per cent. a year. We will not be told that since 1979 there has been a fall in manufacturing output, which is still below the level at which the Government inherited it. We will not be told that since 1979 there has been a net reduction in manufacturing investment, which is still 25 per cent. below the level at which the Government inherited it or that since 1979 a surplus of £5 billion on manufactured trade has been converted into a forecast deficit of £8 billion.

That is an honest and accurate account of the record of a Government who have presided over all those failures, despite the fact that they have enjoyed the unique benefit of North sea oil production—a benefit that they have wholly squandered. Every penny of oil revenue—an average of £8 billion a year—has gone towards paying the cost of increased unemployment. Indeed, that sum does not now even cover the costs of benefits paid and taxes lost because of increases in unemployment since 1979. That money should have been used and could have been used to put Britain back to work; it was used to keep Britain unemployed.

In 25 minutes or so the Chancellor will tell us that, despite its record, the Conservative party won the general election. I doubt whether he will admit to all the ways in which that victory was brought about. *The Spectator*, which is not the natural vehicle for Socialist economic theory, this week described the position exactly:

"Mr. Lawson set the scene for the largest boom in private credit this country has ever seen. It is this boom which more than anything else has been responsible for the recent upturn in the economy, for the sense of well-being undoubtedly felt by the majority of voters . . . and for the Government's re-election."

There can be no dispute about the existence of that credit boom. That credit boom is greater than the similar phenomena generated by Mr. Maudling in 1963 and Lord Barber 10 years later. The credit boom generated by Mr. Maudling was subsequently and continually derided by the school of economists to which the Chancellor subscribes.

We have to establish two facts about the credit boom here and now. First, a credit boom does not and cannot act directly on the most urgent and desperate need of the economy—the moral and economic obligation to reduce unemployment. Secondly, an increase in economic activity stimulated by the credit boom cannot be sustained and nor can the improvements in the standard of living that are its temporary products.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: In a moment.

Sooner or later the Government will have to change course.

Mr. Fallon: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: When I have finished my point.

In the financial statement and Budget reports for this year, published on 17 March 1987, the Government were absolutely explicit:

"Private sector borrowing has been rising and is now over 10 per cent. of GDP. It has clearly contributed more than public borrowing to upward pressure on real interest rates".

That was the Chancellor's opinion. By that frank admission, the Government conceded that private borrowing, and not public borrowing, was prejudicing the prospects of investment at a price that industry could afford. Yet the Government chose to prohibit and hold down public borrowing which finances investment in houses, roads, schools, hospitals and public services. At the same time they encourage private borrowing which finances the purchase of Japanese videos, German motor cars and Italian textiles.

Mr. Fallon: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I have not forgotten the hon. Gentleman. I will give way if he will contain himself.

The Government knew that private borrowing was having a major adverse effect on the economy, yet they allowed it to go ahead because they knew that it would have an immediate effect on their election prospects.

Mr. Fallon: The right hon. Gentleman has just said that the boom in borrowing cannot be sustained. In every previous debate of this nature he has also said that an economic crisis is just around the corner. Why should we believe him now?

Mr. Hattersley: At the moment I am asking the hon. Gentleman to believe the Chancellor, because it was the Chancellor whom I was quoting. I know that that strains credibility almost to breaking point, but the hon. Gentleman ought to accept what the Chancellor says. Just for the clarity of the hon. Gentleman's mind, on which I know he prides himself, I shall read the quotation again. It states:

"Private sector borrowing has been rising and is now over 10 per cent. of GDP. It has clearly contributed more than public borrowing to upward pressure on real interest rates." If the hon. Gentleman wants to argue with that, he must argue with the Chancellor, not with me.

It is because of the Chancellor's judgment that I insist that, sooner or later, there will have to be some curbs on private spending, and on the evidence from Brussels we know what those curbs will be—higher VAT, increases in a tax that hits the lowest earners hardest and the highest earners least. There will be higher VAT on those goods and services that already attract VAT, and VAT will be imposed for the first time on those goods and services that have previously been exempted.

As the Leader of the House would not make it clear yesterday, it is important that the House clearly understands today Lord Cockfield's proposals for VAT—proposals that he suggests that the Commission of the EEC should make obligatory on Britain and all EEC countries.

Lord Cockfield proposes VAT of between 4 and 9 per cent. on items that are currently exempted—fuel, food, children's clothing and shoes, new building, books, periodicals and newspapers. He proposes changes in the standard rate from 15 per cent. to somewhere between 14 per cent. and 19 per cent. Knowing Lord Cockfield as I do, it is inconceivable to me that he made those proposals without receiving the Prime Minister's blessing — [Interruption.]

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose*—

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*—

Mr. Hattersley: The Chancellor says that I cannot know Lord Cockfield. That requires me to offer the one piece of evidence to support my point of view. When I was in the Cabinet Lord Cockfield worked for me. He ran the prices policy and was a desperate devotee of Government intervention in prices. As soon as the Prime Minister came to power he was converted overnight to a passionate devotee of the free market. I believed that he would become Lord Cockfield of Bray, but as it is I have absolutely no doubt that he does not operate in Brussels without obtaining clearance from No. 10 Downing street.

Mr. Kellett-Bowman *rose*—

Mr. Marlow *rose*—

Mr. Hattersley: Yesterday the Prime Minister—

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the right hon. Gentleman to impugn the honour of a Member of the other House when he knows perfectly well that that person has taken an oath not to be influenced by his national Government?

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear the right hon. Gentleman impugn the honour of a Member of the other House, and the hon. Lady should not try to seek to put a question through me.

Mr. Hattersley: I ought to make it clear that when I mentioned Bray I did not mean it as an invitation for the hon. Lady to address the House.

Yesterday the Prime Minister refused absolutely to answer a straight question on the subject of VAT. She did so because we know the true position. The Government want to increase VAT, they intend to increase VAT, but they hope to do so by hiding behind the EEC.

There is only one way in which the Chancellor can convince the House otherwise today, and that is by ending the equivocation displayed yesterday by the Prime Minister and giving a categorical assurance that at the EEC Finance Ministers meeting in July he will oppose all the

[Mr. Hattersley]

Cockfield proposals. It is no good the Prime Minister parading her toughness to the EEC two days a year. If she can take the publicly aggressive line over the CAP that she took yesterday, why cannot she take a publicly aggressive line today over EEC proposals to increase VAT? The only possible answer is that she wants to do it. She welcomes the proposals and intends to do it.

The second criticism of and objection to the credit boom which the Government encouraged and promoted last year is that it did nothing to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Marlow *rose*—

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham) *rose*—

Mr. Hattersley: Reducing unemployment was not—and on the evidence of the Gracious Speech and the statements that accompanied it is still not—a Government priority. Yet unemployment is the most corrosive and wasteful of all the forms of poverty. It damages whole families, disadvantages generation after generation and absorbs resources that could more profitably be used on production and expansion. After eight years of Conservative Government unemployment still stands at a level that is a disgrace to a civilised society. Indeed, it stands at a level which the Government themselves find so shaming that for three years Lord Young of Graffham has earned his ministerial salary for doing little more than massaging the unemployment figures. On the evidence of the Queen's Speech, little will change. The Government will continue their battle not against unemployment but against a truthful description of the unemployment figures.

I confess that this Government have shown themselves admirably flexible when official statistics demonstrate the failure of Government policies. They always make changes, but unfortunately not in the policies—in the statistics. Be it prices, trade, job creation and, above all, employment and unemployment, each set of figures has from time to time been massaged.

Therefore, before we look to the future it is again necessary to remind the Chancellor of the record and the concealed facts. Since 1979, unemployment has increased by 1,812,000, even according to the Government's manipulated figures, and we are now supposed to rejoice that after 19 changes in the statistical record total unemployment stands at less than 3 million. Even if that was an honest figure it would be a disgrace. Even if it was the truth, it would be a truth of which the Prime Minister should be ashamed.

Then the Prime Minister has the nerve to talk, as she did last Thursday, about hidden unemployment under Labour. No Government in British history have hidden unemployment with the cynical determination that has been shown by her and her colleagues.

Mr. Marlow *rose*—

Mr. Hattersley: I know that perception is not the hon. Gentleman's strong point, but I suspect that even he by now will have gathered that I shall not give way to him.

Yet on the evidence of the Queen's Speech, the Government propose to go on in very much the same way. The election campaign promises to cut unemployment have been abandoned. There is no mention in the Queen's Speech of reducing or reductions in unemployment.

Instead we have an undertaking "further" to increase employment. The word "further" is itself a fraud. Since 1979, Great Britain has lost 1,422,000 jobs—more than the rest of the Common Market added together. Since 1979, 2 million jobs have been lost in British manufacturing industry. Even in the first half of this year jobs were still being lost at the rate of 9,000 a month. This Government's attitude to unemployment and the unemployed demonstrates more than their casual concern for the truth. It reveals the underlying principle of Government policies. This is a Government of some of the people masquerading as a Government of all of the people, for they ruthlessly write off those parts of Britain and those sections of society whose votes they cannot win.

That was the central characteristic of Tory policy between 1979 and 1987, and that will clearly be the central characteristic of Tory policy during the next five years, with one new public relations addition. That addition is the lip service that is now being paid to the problems of the inner cities. The most hopeful interpretation of this sudden and belated conversion is that the Government have learnt a lesson that we have tried to teach them day after day since they were elected.

But the problems of deprivation and under-privilege cannot be confined to the ghettos. If there is deprivation, homelessness, poverty and, above all, lack of hope in the inner cities, there can be no lasting peace or security in the prosperous suburbs.

In parts of my constituency adult male unemployment now stands at over 50 per cent. Young men leave school with no chance of employment for the next four or five years. Money that was once promised for house improvement and renovation has been withdrawn by the Government. The black and Asian British suffer the indignities of the Nationality Act and immigration regulations. The Gracious Speech proposes to extend those indignities. It is a miracle that areas such as Sparkbrook have remained tranquil for so long.

I warn the Prime Minister that the inner cities will not accept a five-year public relations exercise that is intended only to convey the impression of Government activity and prime ministerial compassion. I tell her that the problems of the inner cities will be solved only by more Government resources being concentrated on them for new houses, schools, better homes and, above all, jobs. Those jobs will have to come from manufacturing industry. The new rich of the financial services industries will not drive their Porsches to inner-city wine bars. The inner cities need small manufacturing companies. Those companies will only move to grow in the inner cities if they are persuaded to do so by Government incentives that encourage them to employ local inner city labour.

Mr. Marlow: If they are not inhibited by Labour local authorities.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who tried to intervene earlier, now shouts from the Government Benches. I will tell the hon. Gentleman a story. The leader of Birmingham city council, who is moderate by most normal people's standards and is Right-wing by a few people's standard—but not those of the hon. Member for Northampton, North—told the Secretary of State for the Environment that in Birmingham, where we have much dereliction to overcome and many inner-city problems to solve, he was prepared

to work with the Government, and for municipal and private enterprise to work in co-operation if that was the best way of reducing unemployment and improving facilities. The Secretary of State said that there was not a hope. He said that the Government must operate an independent development agency and that they would not co-operate with the city council. If the hon. Member wants co-operation he should ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, not me.

Councils all over the country have been waiting for years to develop their inner cities. They read Government public relations handouts about the Government proposing a blitz on the inner cities, but they know that we have had a Government blitz on the inner cities for the last eight years. That blitz has increased unemployment, closed down facilities, deteriorated the housing stock and caused half of the problems of the inner cities.

The inner cities are the most obvious and desperate example of divisions in our society. Those divisions have been intentionally widened.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is the right hon. Gentleman's party revising its attitude to the private sector and wealth creation? Is not one of the problems that some Labour authorities are hostile to the private sector and have forced rates up, which will not attract job creation in the first instance?

Mr. Hattersley: A number of local authorities have increased rates to preserve services. Most have been forced to do so because of the reduction in Government grant. When the CBI, in one of its pre-electoral moods of honest objectivity, listed the problems of companies opening and expanding in inner cities, high rates did not appear. The hon. Gentleman is creating spectres and excuses for the Government's failure. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the example of Birmingham city council—which is presently ruled by the Labour party and which wants to co-operate with the Government—he will find that the Government and the Secretary of State for the Environment stand in the way of a proper partnership. We in the Labour party believe that that is wrong.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is the Prime Minister's latter-day conversion to care and concern about those in the inner cities not somewhat suspect? Is it not strange that that concern has been shown not during the last eight years but only in the realisation of her self-imposed task of destroying Socialism?

Mr. Hattersley: I noticed the Prime Minister, in a moment of euphoria, mounting the stairs at 10 Downing street on election night and speaking about the inner cities. However, what she said was not about improving the inner cities: it was about getting the inner-city vote. The Prime Minister has no hope of doing that, and if in passing we get a little money for an area that needs it so desperately I shall regard her cynicism as being almost worth while.

The inner cities are the most desperate example of divisions in our society, but other divisions are being intentionally widened by the Government and their policy. During her speech last Thursday the Prime Minister, particularly when forced away from the platitudes of her prepared text, proved time after time that Government policy is designed—I use that word with care—to widen further divisions within our society. That is the inevitable

outcome of their philosophy. They are the party of inequality and their support for that doctrine is repeated and reflected in the Gracious Speech.

It is typified by the Government's mindless obsession with privatisation. They have a passion to turn public utilities into private monopolies which, if British Gas and British Telecom are any guide, will be unconcerned with the interests of the small consumer. That vacuous privatisation mania was personified by the Secretary of State for Energy in his first interview after his appointment. He said that he knew nothing about the privatisation of the electricity industry but that he was passionately in favour of it. If the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) had shown such blind faith he would still be on the Front Bench.

The Government's belief in inequality is demonstrated in all their policies. The poll tax may reduce the burden of local government expenditure that is now carried by some prosperous ratepayers, but it will increase the burden on families at the bottom of the income scale. The reorganisation of secondary schools may enable a minority of self-confident and articulate parents to fashion their children's schools according to their own design, but it will create a two-tier education system in which the generality of children will attend schools that are believed to be, and may well become, second-best.

The most significant passage in the Prime Minister's speech last Thursday was an aside that she made before replying to my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan). She said:

"Yes, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, who comes from Scotland, which, after London and the south-east, has the second highest income per head of any part of the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1987; Vol. 118, c.54.]

The second highest income per head in the United Kingdom after London and the south-east means the third highest income per head in the United Kingdom, but it is not the Prime Minister's usual misuse of statistics that is the most important part of that comment. Whether Scotland has the second, third or fourth highest income per head in the United Kingdom, the same point applies. That boast ignores the 350,000 Scottish men and women who are unemployed. It ignores the 318,000 Scottish families who are living below the poverty line. It ignores the 140,000 pensioners who have no independent income and who have been cheated by the Government.

Pensioner couples have been cheated out of £11 a week and single pensioners have been cheated out of £7 a week. They do not enjoy the third highest income in the United Kingdom. That criterion of success ignores the shortage of decent housing in Scottish cities, the waiting lists for beds in Scottish hospitals and the need for more resources in Scottish schools.

The Prime Minister devalues and disregards all those matters because she is contemptuous of public services and entirely remote from those who use them. On the other hand, Scotland—this is enormously to its credit—took a different view. Despite enjoying the third highest income per head in the United Kingdom it predominantly voted for the Labour party because, unlike the Prime Minister, it realised that income per head is only part of life.

It was in that belief, at the time of the Budget and throughout the general election campaign, that the Labour party urged the concentration of available resources on

[Mr. Hattersley]

those areas of the economy most in need of real investment. We shall continue throughout this Parliament to advance the same argument.

I believed in March, I believe now and I repeat, that the revenue available to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget would have been better used to increase the pension and child benefit.

I shall put the position on the prospect of taxes exactly. The record shows that whenever the Chancellor played his "Will he, won't he?" games over income tax reductions, the Opposition always took the view that whenever he pretended to tantalise his weak-minded Back Benchers, when the time came taxes would be cut. Whatever the consequences, whatever the alternative use for resources and whatever the demands for investment in new jobs, improved services and higher benefits, when the time comes the Chancellor always makes the tax cuts with which he chooses to tease his colleagues. I make the same prediction today.

The tax cuts which the Chancellor promises will be on income tax alone. The Gracious Speech promises further reductions in taxation, but once again the word "further" is wholly without justification.

Apart from the very poor and the very rich, the total burden of taxation—income tax, VAT and national insurance contributions—has increased since 1979. The family with two adults on average earnings and two children paid 38.4 per cent. of its income in tax in 1978-79. This year, the same family will pay 41.2 per cent.

The Government certainly intend to reduce income tax, but I have no doubt that they will compensate for that reduction by extending VAT—[*Interruption.*] If the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) worries about my judgment, let him be assured that the Chancellor said that he saw the extension of the VAT base as an essential part of the Budget strategy and a necessary counterpart to a reduction in income tax.

That is the Chancellor's intention and strategy and that is what will happen in this Parliament. The switch in taxes to which the Government are committed is intended—again, I use my words with care—to move the tax burden away from the high paid and towards low-income families.

The Government's eight-year record is undeniable. The Government have consistently taken from the poor and given to the rich. I make it clear now that had we won the election, we would have sought to reverse that process. Our defeat a month ago cannot and will not change our commitment to a genuine and substantial redistribution of national resources.

I believe that it is possible to build a fair society without increasing the taxes—direct or indirect—paid by the majority of the working population. But we cannot accommodate—I see no point in attempting to—those men and women who are opposed in principle to redistribution because they are emotionally and ideologically antagonistic to the notion of a more equal society.

The Labour party's future lies not in less equality but in a clearer identification of that philosophy. I want to make my position absolutely clear today. Until men and women on low incomes are provided with the resources which make it possible for them to exercise the choices of a free society, all the talk about freedom of choice will, for

millions of British families, be a cruel joke. The real test of freedom is whether the freedoms which theoretically exist can be exercised in practice. That is the point and the philosophy which the Labour party will advocate in the next five years.

Were the Prime Minister to do us the courtesy of being here today, I do not believe that she would deny that the Queen's Speech is intentionally wholly ideological. Gone are the days when the Tory party simply did what seemed to be best from hour to hour, day to day and from month to month. Now, it consistently and consciously attempts to create a society in which the philosophers of the new liberalism believe. That society neglects public services and reduces public provision, at least when no election is in the offing.

We all noticed this week that after last year's boasts about increased public expenditure, the new Chief Secretary to the Treasury, with the election over and the votes counted, announced that he was about to descend on all the Departments which naively believe that the autumn statement represented a real change in Government philosophy. The autumn statement was a brief attempt to prove that the Conservative party cared about education and health. The election being over, the pretence was abandoned within days.

The Government's basic philosophy has not changed. That philosophy requires a reduction, and sometimes an extinction, of public services. The Government will continue to justify the damage that they do and the pain that they cause by calling it freedom.

The Government will argue that a free society is one in which those who can afford to pay the bill have the medical treatment of their choice, in the hospital of their choice and on the day of their choice. We argue that a free society is one which provides the same privilege for the largest possible number of men and women irrespective of their income. To provide that wider freedom—

Mr. Marlow: The doctor will be busy.

Mr. Hattersley: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to intervene?

Mr. Marlow: The right hon. Gentleman makes the point made by the leader of the Labour party during the election campaign when he said that everyone should have the doctor of his choice, when he chooses and where he chooses. The doctor will be very busy under such a Socialist system.

Mr. Hattersley: Since the hon. Gentleman believes that we can never meet the medical needs of all the people, he wants to meet the needs, however trivial, of those with the biggest bank balances. I wish that the Prime Minister had had the guts to say that during the election campaign rather than making excuses.

The argument about freedom and liberating more and more of our people, of giving them the chances and resources that they do not now possess, will be the dominant argument during the next five years. It will be made clear that by providing the resources for ordinary people we are the freedom party and the Queen's Speech opening the next Parliament will be delivered by a Labour Government.

4.57 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): There can be no doubting the significance of today's

debate. Not only is it the House's first opportunity to debate the economy since a general election which delivered a resounding vote of confidence in the Government and their economic policy; it is also—or so we are led to believe—the last economic debate in which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) will be leading for the Opposition.

We shall miss the right hon. Gentleman, and his crystal balls, but his colleagues may not, for the right hon. Gentleman has been made something of a scapegoat for his party's massive defeat. Last week at least two national newspapers reported that both the right hon. Gentleman's right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and the general secretary of the Labour party blamed Labour's election defeat on the failure of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook to present their taxation and economic policies effectively. It seems that this view was endorsed by the shadow Cabinet in its lengthy post-mortem last night. That is most unfair. It is true that I had to give the right hon. Gentleman a certain amount of assistance, but between us we were able to leave the electorate in no doubt that his economic policies would mean higher borrowing, higher inflation, and higher taxes for everyone.

There was no failure of presentation at all. The voters understood all this perfectly, and drew their own conclusions. The position was summed up admirably by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), when he said on "Panorama" shortly after the Election:

"presentation is necessary . . . but no amount of slick presentation could work if we didn't have something sensible to say. And it's getting the sensible things to say that's been the difficulty."

It is perceptive and sapient remarks of that kind that no doubt make the hon. Member for Dagenham hot favourite, according to the press, to succeed the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook as the chief economic spokesman for the Opposition.

I have no wish to refight the battles of the general election. They are concluded and we won them. Instead, today's debate gives us a chance to reflect on the lessons of our first eight years in government, on what has changed and why, and to look forward to the years ahead.

The success of the British economy is now beyond doubt. Business men and investors, at home and abroad, all recognise that the British economy is now sounder than at any time since the war. So, indeed, does the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who, writing in *The Guardian* last week, attributed Labour's third defeat in a row chiefly to the sharp rise in living standards and steady economic growth that have occurred, according to him, since 1982—an economic assessment he somehow failed to make during the campaign itself; an oversight, no doubt.

It is, however, a measure of the transformation that we have achieved over the past eight years that the whole tone and tenor of the economic debate have changed. In 1979 the questions were whether accelerating inflation was inevitable and whether the country had become ungovernable. Runaway price increases, balance of payments crises, and an appalling strike record seemed to be endemic features of British life. We were the sick man of Europe, and many thought that the illness was terminal.

By 1983 we had demonstrated that the answer to both those questions was an emphatic no, and the questions themselves had changed. In 1983 the question was how

soon would the recovery peter out, or inflation take off again. It was thought that one or the other, if not both, must surely occur.

By 1987 we had demonstrated, once more, that no such fate lay in store. The economic upswing that began a little over six years ago is today stronger than ever, while inflation remains low. Last week's figures showed a healthy rise in national output in the first three months of this year, to reach a level more than 4 per cent. higher than a year ago, with manufacturing and services contributing in equal measure, and exports up sharply, too.

So now, at the start of our third term in office, the question has changed yet again. No longer do people ask whether Britain can have sustained growth without rising inflation. We have that, and everybody knows it. The question now is what is it that has brought about the remarkable transformation of our economic performance; and what is it that has brought about an unprecedented six years of steady growth and low inflation, with no sign of a let-up?

It is a question that is being asked, not just in this country, but abroad as well, for despite the fact that last year's oil price collapse was a mixed blessing for us but an unalloyed gain for most of our industrial competitors, it is their growth forecasts that are being revised down at a time when our forecast is being revised up.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Is it the intention of the Chancellor to refer to the extremely precarious nature of the international economy and to the fact that the recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report No. 41 points very definitely to those international concerns that he ought to refer to and advise on?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman has always been a little impetuous. If he waits, he will hear me deal with the world economy later in my remarks.

The answer to the question that I raised a moment ago about how we have achieved the transformation that we have brought about is clear. At the heart of our success has been a fundamental change of approach to economic policy. No longer do we rely on the failed nostrum that it is Governments who can stimulate faster growth by expanding budget deficits, and no longer do we attempt to tackle inflation by distorting controls on prices and incomes. Instead, we have used a firm monetary policy to control inflation, we have backed that up with a prudent fiscal policy that leaves room for the private sector to expand, and, just as important, we have reformed the supply side of the economy. We have liberated the private sector from unnecessary shackles that have held it back for far too long, we have restored incentives, and we have created the conditions in which enterprise can flourish—and it has.

Throughout most of the '60s and '70s Governments sought to stimulate growth by expansionary monetary and fiscal policies. It is by now all too evident that, far from stimulating growth, all that did was to stimulate inflation, and that any short-term increase in output was very soon reversed. At the same time, the onset of inflation led to a panoply of restrictions being imposed on the private sector. It is clear that this, too, was completely misdirected. So far from reducing inflation, the restrictions reduced output as firms found the environment too restrictive, and the uncertainties too great, for them to be able to plan ahead with confidence.

[Mr. Lawson]

The Government have therefore completely changed that misdirected approach to economic policy, and the result is clear. Inflation is now around its lowest levels for nearly 20 years. At the same time, output has been rising strongly and steadily, year in, year out — with unemployment now falling more rapidly than at any time since records began.

We shall continue to pursue those policies in the new Parliament. For example, the Gracious Speech included proposals to reduce controls on private rented housing, so as to make it easier for people to move to jobs in a different part of the country. Alongside deregulation, we have also taken positive steps to improve the working of the economy. For example, the excessive rigidity of the pay system in this country has been a persistent problem. A wider spread of profit-related pay would make for greater flexibility, and to encourage this I shall be reintroducing my proposals for tax relief for profit-related pay in the Finance Bill to be published tomorrow.

Each of those supply side reforms is important in itself, but together they have contributed to a more fundamental change in British industry. Once again managers are able to manage, and are doing so successfully. Those who make profits — and, leaving aside North sea companies, profitability is at its highest level for more than a decade — are no longer treated as pariahs. In short, the spirit of enterprise is once again flourishing in this country, the land of its birth, and with it has come a spirit of optimism, a transformation of our national morale which cannot be measured in the official statistics but without which a talented people can never become a successful nation.

The task of revitalising our economic performance has involved a number of radical new policies. Two key examples are the privatisation programme and the reform of the trade unions. Both have been of central importance. The dismal performance of the nationalised industries had long been an albatross round the neck of taxpayers, businesses and consumers. And the damage done by the excessive power of trade unions — not just to the economy but to the social fabric as well — was evident for all to see.

Certainly, reforming those areas involved some tough decisions and the determination to push them through in the face of opposition, but the success of the policies is now clear, and the British people have yet again shown their support for them. The privatised companies are flourishing, recording higher profits, and providing a better service to their customers. Governments around the world are now following our example and injecting vigour into sluggish state-run industries by returning them to private ownership. Similarly, the success of our trade union reforms in improving industrial relations, notably by giving more say to individual trade union members, is now welcomed by all except the Bourbons of the Left.

The need for tough decisions does not arise only at the start of a Government's period of office. There is much more still to do if we are to consolidate and extend the changes that have taken place in the economy and society. The Gracious Speech set out our priorities, in particular more choice in housing for tenants and more choice for parents in the education of their children. In both those key areas we are again challenging long-held nostrums. And already the vested interests are marshalling their opposition. But just as we did not shrink from

privatisation and reforming the trade unions, so we shall not be deflected from these further reforms in housing and education.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Nevertheless, will the Chancellor acknowledge that a major privatisation programme diverts funds within the City from new growth and new investment? What measures does he propose to introduce that will ensure that small businesses, especially outside London and the south-east, obtain access to venture capital on a greater scale than has been the case in the past few years?

Mr. Lawson: The venture capital industry, which was very small indeed — virtually non-existent — when we took office in 1979, is now higher, in proportion to our GDP, than the United States' venture capital industry is in relation to its GDP. The growth of the venture capital industry has been one of the Government's most remarkable success stories.

However, let me return to education. The need to improve standards of education in Britain is as essential to our economic success in the world of tomorrow as it is to the quality of life in this country. The universities, and higher education generally, have on the whole reacted well in recent years to the need to become more responsive to their industrial hinterland, and it is up to an increasingly profitable industry to take greater advantage of what is now on offer, particularly in research and development.

We have not seen a comparable improvement in our schools. That is essential. Indeed, as Mr. Corelli Barnett has devastatingly documented in his book "The Audit of War", it is long overdue. Inevitably, it will take time to put that right.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): How, then, does the right hon. Gentleman account for the cries of agony from serious organisations such as Save British Science and for the way in which many of our top scientists are leaving Britain?

Mr. Lawson: In fact, the latest study shows that the number of PhDs who are emigrating is very small, and much smaller than it was when the previous study was made in 1963.

There is a wider point here. Economic success cannot be achieved overnight. It depends on getting the right policies in place, and then sticking to them through thick and thin. One of the most significant aspects of the result of the general election was the way in which the electorate decisively rejected the blandishments of those parties which offered instant and painless solutions to problems — usually, but not inevitably, through the application of additional public spending. The unprecedentedly long period of continuity of policy that we have seen in Britain has brought about a maturity of judgment in the British people which the Opposition parties failed to comprehend.

The Government will therefore continue with their economic policies based, as they are, on sound money and free markets. In 1979 those policies involved radical departures from the accepted way of doing things and were greeted with scepticism by many at home and abroad. Now, the world is following our lead. There is now an international consensus on the importance of firm fiscal and monetary policies, backed by economic freedom and lower taxes, and privatisation is one of our most successful

exports. These policies command the confidence of the world, and they crucially command the confidence of the British people.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The Chancellor referred to higher education and the universities, and he then went on to talk about the result of the general election. Does he agree that Labour won Aberdeen, South and his right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) refused to join the Government because of the Government's appalling record on Aberdeen university? Will he take that point seriously?

Mr. Lawson: I am a little old-fashioned. I have the greatest respect for Aberdeen university, and, indeed, for Scottish education generally, but I must observe that both the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge returned Conservative Members.

The prospects before us are good, and the chief causes for concern lie not at home but abroad. I am now dealing with the international context, in which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) was interested.

Mr. Dwyll: What about Oxford, East?

Mr. Lawson: I was referring to the other Oxford seat, which we won.

The chief causes for concern are, first, the threat of a slowdown in Germany, Japan and the United States; secondly, the risk of a slide into protectionism; and, thirdly, the continued difficulty of managing the international debt problem.

I singled out the risk of an international slowdown in my Budget speech this year. Since then, while the risk is still there, I have been encouraged by the increasing degree of practical co-operation among the leading finance Ministers. The agreement that we reached in Paris in February to stabilise exchange rates has been an undoubted success, despite widespread initial scepticism in both the markets and the press. What we have to do now is to ensure the full and speedy implementation of the policy commitments which backed it up. That means, in particular, reducing the budget deficit in the United States, and reducing and reforming taxation in Germany and Japan.

Meanwhile, we simply must not allow the world economy to be sidetracked into a retreat into protectionism. That would solve none of our problems, and aggravate many. There remains the problem of managing the huge debts that were accumulated by many developing countries in the 1970s, and here there have been a number of encouraging developments, all in the direction of greater realism.

First, the commercial banks have used the five years since the debt crisis broke to strengthen their balance sheets considerably. The recent move by the NatWest bank has been the most striking further development in this country. I welcome unequivocally the steps that the banks have taken. I hope too that they will open the way to developing more market solutions—for example, an improved secondary market in some of the debts that are owed to the banking system. But we have to recognise that that process will not meet the needs of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries of sub-Saharan Africa. There is simply no way these countries can ever service their debts in full, and most of their debts are due to

Governments and official institutions, not to banks. That is why, for these countries, I put forward a three-point plan at the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund this year.

First, I asked the creditor Governments to continue the process of converting old aid loans into grants. The United Kingdom has already done that on a substantial scale. I am glad to say that a number of others are now following suit.

Secondly, I urged the creditor Governments to agree to reschedule the debts of sub-Saharan African countries over longer periods than before, with grace periods for the repayment of capital. Since I put that forward, I am glad to report to the House that the so-called Paris club of creditor Governments has agreed four such reschedulings. I look forward to more.

Thirdly, and absolutely crucially, I argued that we have to consider reducing interest rates on official debt to well below market rates for those countries. That is the only way that we can permanently lighten the burden on the poorest countries, rather than just rearranging it. That costs money, but at the end of the day it amounts to little more than facing up to reality. I take considerable satisfaction in the fact that the idea was given a fair wind at the Venice summit last month, and is reflected in the communiqué from that summit. I look forward to progress before the end of the year.

Finally, we are now beginning to look at ways of applying similar principles to the arrangements made by the poorest countries with the IMF. Here, too, the Venice summit promised work in the spirit of the ideas that I canvassed in Washington in the spring. There is still some way to go, but, step by step, we are demonstrating that the political will is there.

The fact that Britain is once again able to look outwards, and play a leading part in discussions of world economic developments, is another measure of the transformation that we have achieved in this country. But that transformation goes beyond developments in the economy. It extends to more profound changes in the way society works.

Not only have businesses and managers been given the freedom to pursue their own destinies, in their own way, without interference from the Government, but ordinary people, too, in all walks of life have been given more choice in the way they live their lives. This is reflected in the spread of ownership in society. Some 2.5 million more families now own the homes they live in than was the case in 1979. One in five of the adult population now directly owns shares in British industry, very nearly as many as are members of affiliated trade unions. We are now taking further steps to encourage the spread of private pension provision, and tomorrow's Finance Bill will include our proposals for tax changes to this end.

The benefits of wider ownership go far beyond the fact that people will be better off as the price of their house appreciates and the value of their shares goes up. Much more important is the fact that it gives more people a direct stake in the economy and the society in which they live. Those who own their own home take pleasure in spending time and money in maintaining and improving it, so there is a benefit to them, to the housing stock, and to the wider community. They have something to pass on to their children, too, which is not only good in itself, but, will transform the attitudes of the next generation. Again, those who own shares have a keener interest in the

[Mr. Lawson]

performance of British industry and in what makes it successful. The connection is obviously most immediate for employees who have acquired shares in the firms they work for and who are in a position to help those firms to thrive. People who have made their own provision for old age can look forward to retirement with a new sense of independence, without being wholly dependent on the state for their future income.

This spread of ownership is helping to break down the barriers in our society between "them" and "us". For too long a class of tenants and workers appeared to be in direct conflict with a class of owners and shareholders. This mentality was a major cause of many of our past industrial relations difficulties, and it still lingers on long after its principal causes are behind us. It is time—and long overdue—that it came to an end. That is why the extension of choice, alongside the extension of ownership, is a key theme in our proposals for the new Parliament.

More freedom, wider ownership and a spirit of self-reliance are becoming, at long last, the distinguishing characteristics of our society. The Opposition tried, and failed, in the election campaign to twist this truth into the malicious slander that a self-reliant society is one based on greed and materialism. They should pause to reflect, for example, that recorded giving to charity has doubled, in real terms, since 1979. The tax concessions that we have given have helped, but the heart of the matter is that this is scarcely the symptom of a society dominated by selfishness.

In their first eight years this Government have achieved many things that were once judged impossible. I have mentioned some of them—above all the strength of the economy, on which so much else, whether resources to assist the needy and deprived, or Britain's standing in the world, directly depends. Other achievements include privatisation, reform of the trade unions, and the spread of ownership. But so far from resting on our laurels, we are now embarking on a programme of further reform, containing measures every bit as radical as those that we have already taken. Both our achievements so far and our proposals for the future have won the unqualified endorsement of the British people. A key reason for that is that it is our policies and our proposals that are moving with the tide of ideas.

That great historical turning point, the Conservative victory of 1979, was more than just another swing of the political pendulum. It was brought about by the conviction of the British people that a completely different approach to government was needed. The post-war consensus had been based on the idea that government was the principal agent of economic advance and of social progress. By 1979 the failure of that approach was obvious to all. Not only had Governments failed to deliver what had been expected of them, but their all-pervading role had had a thoroughly debilitating effect on the energies and ambitions of the British people.

Our approach has been to concentrate on doing those jobs which only the Government can, and must do, and to release the spirit and talents of the British people. The significance of the election result is not only in the approval of what has been done so far, but lies equally in the outright rejection of those who sought to turn the clock back to the days when all problems were thought to be for the state to tackle and no room was left for individual

initiative and self-help. So far from seeking to go back to those days, the British people in June 1987 voted for more freedom and for more choice. That is our agenda for the future.

5.24 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): It would be churlish of me not to congratulate the Chancellor of the Exchequer on recognising that oldest of political adages that the jingle in the pocket is probably the most important background to an election. He certainly provided that. I hope that he will not think it a backhanded compliment if I say that I think that he had more to do with the Conservative victory than did his right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit).

The issues that we face in the Queen's Speech are far more deep-seated than the contents of the legislative programme. In the legislative programme, the Government of course have the right to introduce most of the legislation, and that programme will be fairly crowded. However, behind the 1987 election there are some important lessons. It would be foolish for those of us in opposition not to recognise those lessons.

I did not recognise the economy from some of the more extravagant tributes that the Chancellor paid to it. Broadly speaking, tributes to the economy are better coming from others than from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. There is no doubt that the economy is now stronger in many important and significant areas than it has been for many years, and we can all rejoice at that. However, the Chancellor would be wise to pay more attention to the uncompetitive nature of much of British manufacturing industry when that is compared with the costs of some of our major industrial competitors, not least the Federal Republic of Germany and many other European Community countries. The Chancellor would also be wise to cast his mind forward to the looming balance of payments problems, and especially to the problems that will occur when North sea oil revenues begin to recede.

At this stage of the Parliament it would also be wise to consider the ingredients of the electoral successes in 1979, 1983 and 1987. I have no doubt that once again, as in 1983, so in 1987, the Government won the debate on the defence of this country hands down. I say that with no great joy. I hope that the lessons will be learnt and I look forward to the return to a bipartisanship on defence policy that was the hallmark of this country from 1940 to 1980 when the former Prime Minister, now Sir James Callaghan, left the leadership of the Labour party.

The Government won some of the arguments on economic policy but not all of them. The area in which the Government lost the election was wisely drawn to our attention by the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) in a very thoughtful speech. He said that he thought that the Government had won on points. Conservatives have to say that. However, he was really saying that the Government lost on points — [Interruption.] I suggest that hon. Members who missed the right hon. Gentleman's speech should read it. Beneath his speech they will see a quite penetrating criticism of some of the social policies.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) also made a fascinating and interesting speech in two important particulars. First, he drew attention to the problem that the House faces over the election result in

Scotland. As democrats, that presents us with major problems. It is wholly appropriate for those of us speaking from the alliance Benches to draw attention to another fact. Not only was Scotland disfranchised, but 7 million people are substantially under-represented. Hon. Members should reflect on that fact in all fairness and justice. In almost all other European Community countries, under their system there would now be 63 SDP and 83 Liberal Members of Parliament.

It is no use our complaining. We must defeat the system that exists. It is perfectly clear to me that, unless we are able to learn the lessons of the three successive election defeats, there will be another Conservative victory in 1991. We intend to learn such lessons. Before Government Members cheer, let me say that we intend to learn such lessons, in particular in the most crucial linkage between social policy and the market economy. The market economy is here to stay—that is one of the other lessons of the last three elections—but the market economy as practised by the Conservatives is not here to stay in any sense at all. There is a growing recognition—indeed, one has to say that at least the Government recognise that there is a problem in inner cities—that what is on offer in terms of, as some purists might say, a pure, unadulterated market economy is insufficient to grapple with the social problems that are thrown up by our complex industrial society.

Over the next four years, the real test of the political parties—particularly for the Opposition—is whether we can outflank the Government in winning people's confidence in what I have called the social market economy. I shall draw attention to some aspects of it.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North, apart from mentioning Scotland, drew attention to education. That is the most crucial matter for the country. I say that as the father of three children who are going through the state education system. Nobody can deny that it is a hairy existence keeping one's children in the state education system that is operated under the IEA. If I feel angry at what is happening, many more people must feel much more angry, but there are a number of things to learn. I do not quite share the right hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm for all aspects of the proposed education reforms, but I cannot praise him on the one hand and, on the other hand, not recognise that, if he believes that in such proposals there is the kernel of something as momentous as the Education Act 1944, I must at least look at such education proposals and take them seriously.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science is one of the more thoughtful right hon. Members. His record should allow him to create legislation that is as constructive as the Education Act 1944. If he wishes to achieve that goal, he will have to learn a few lessons about presentation and acceptability. It is not a wise idea to launch a proposal for a city technology college from the Tory party conference. That does not have the characteristic quality of ensuring that it will be accepted enthusiastically by the substantial portions of local education authorities which are not controlled by Conservatives. I do not make a narrow point; it is an important one. How one presents such education reforms will be crucial.

If the decision has been taken—I support it—to go for self-governing schools and to treat such schools as large enterprises with substantial budgets, they must have resources. That is one of the crucial points that the right

hon. Member for Shropshire, North made. It is no use having big structural changes unless there is the oil to encourage such changes to ride over some difficulties, and that means more money. In blunt terms, we all know that it is difficult to achieve major social changes and social reforms if we operate in an atmosphere of tight finance. It is also difficult to operate against the local education authorities.

I have had some savage things to say about some of the conduct of the Left in local government. One of the tragedies of their behaviour is that they have tended to destroy the good in local government, and there is much good in local government. One of the things that I hope we shall be able to ram home to the Government is that, for centuries, local government has been one of the strengths of the British democratic system. If the Government want educational reforms, they must try to go with the grain of good local government. Of course they should make a change in local authority capital receipts. They are a sore, and a justified sore, for all good local authorities, but the matter is more important than that. There is a danger that the Government do not understand the positive merit of having another democratic source of power outside Westminster and Whitehall. It is a constitutional safeguard that, when power resides with the Government of the day in the House, power frequently resides in the council chambers of the country, in other hands, whether at this stage Labour or the alliance. Such countervailing balances have an important part in strengthening and deepening our democracy. An outright assault on local government will be resisted by both sides of the House.

It is probably too late for the Government to draw back from the poll tax, but all the indications from Scotland are that it will not only be resented but will throw up immense problems for the good running of local government and for the support and sustaining of effective local government. It would be helpful if the Government would think again about the poll tax.

There are other areas in which a partnership between local government and central Government is crucial, and in no way greater than in trying to revive inner cities. The Government have put forward some good ideas. I say without boasting that many of them have been openly advocated from these Benches for many years. It is not the first time that our ideas have been pinched, nor will it be the last.

I recommend that the Chancellor look again at industrial bonds and a way of getting greater leverage on finance from tax concessions. They have been effectively used in the United States in the rebuilding of inner city development. A public-private partnership is every bit as important as a local government-central Government partnership if the inner cities are to be rebuilt. Let us not have hostility to local authorities. Let us have more imagination from local authorities, and particularly from Labour authorities, in dealing with the public-private partnership.

Hon. Members should consider Glasgow—it is not a soft-centred, moderate, Labour-controlled council, yet it has understood the need to work a public-private partnership—and contrast the way in which the Labour Left in Glasgow has dealt with the public-private partnership and how the Labour Left in Liverpool has dealt with that partnership. It is as if the two cities were separated by an ocean, not by two nations.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: I prefer not to; time is short.

Another important matter is the Health Service. There are probably few things closer to my heart than the effective running of the Health Service. It is totally true that we can basically go on spending money in an almost unlimited way and there will never be satisfaction, but the percentage of GDP that the country currently spends on the Health Service is inadequate when judged by any comparative standards all around the world. *[Interruption.]* It is inadequate. We can argue about how much needs to be done, but I suspect that the Health Service needs at least another 1 to 2 per cent. of GDP over the next 10 years before it can truly cope.

Within the Health Service—that vast enterprise, as I found to my enjoyment when I was Minister for Health for two and a half years—there is immense scope for greater efficiency. I recommend to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the alliance proposals for an internal market within the National Health Service. The proposals would give the right to the patient, if there is a waiting list in his health district, to go to another health district. Charging is done between health districts, and no cash is related to the patient. That patient, by his own choice, moving to another health district, puts a powerful financial incentive on his health district to put its house in order. It will not like having to pay out money to another health district.

This is also a good opportunity to deal with the frontier between the private and public health sectors. It makes no sense to prevent somebody who can be dealt with in a private hospital more cheaply than in another part of the NHS from having treatment. There is no reason why treatment cannot be contracted out if a patient can have his inguinal hernia dealt with in that way. Good for him. He does not pay—the health district pays. We all know what happens to a docker who waits nine months for an inguinal hernia operation. If he is lucky, he can be kept at work. If he is kept at work he will be on very much reduced pay, because he is not able to lift anything. It is a great mistake to think that large waiting lists are not an economic disadvantage to the country. They also cause great hardship.

This internal market concept for greater efficiency in the National Health Service does not breach any of the fundamental principles, which I would fight to the last to maintain, that care should be provided on the basis of health need, not on capacity to pay. However, that also puts much pressure on my profession, which is often the greatest single obstacle to efficient running of the Health Service and to greater efficiency in the management of large waiting lists. I recommend that proposal to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

When the Chancellor is looking at the inner cities, I suggest that he would be wise to consider making a reduction in the national insurance contribution paid by the employer in areas of high unemployment or inner city deprivation. That is a powerful financial incentive to encourage jobs, which would not cost much. Again, that was an alliance proposal.

I should like to refer again to education, in the light of what I said about the internal market for the Health Service. In their education proposals, when they are asking for a self-governing school, with the freedom to free itself from local government bureaucracy and run itself, why do

the Government not say that entry into that school will be on a non-selective basis, following the same selection criteria as those used by the local authority? *[Interruption.]* We shall probe that. We shall probe the Government's intentions. I might be joined in this by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North, who talked about the collective tradition of the maintained sector of education.

If it is really greater choice without privilege, sign me up. I want that, but I do not want to see selection coming in through the back door. There is an aspect of the Prime Minister's presentation of the proposals that sees them as rescuing the grammar schools, so many of which she herself abolished. But the real question is: can one give choice in the inner-city areas for the parents who feel trapped in schools that are providing and have provided for many years an inadequate education system?

We in the Social Democratic party will look at those educational reforms with great care. It is not immediate, instant opposition. If we can be convinced that the proposals are not introducing selection by the back door, and that they are introducing choice and variety into the education system, all credit to them.

In a Maitland lecture to the Institution of Structural Engineers, I took the same view about the city technology colleges. The problem with them as they are currently presented is that, again, they have a selective intake. However, if that were done in partnership with the local authority and there was no selection, and the catchment area was much wider so that it did not scoop off people from the local sixth forms—

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: I shall not give way. I should like to make my speech in my own way.

At present the catchment area is narrowly confined. If adaptations are made in the process of legislation, we shall be delighted. That brings us back to how this Parliament will be conducted. Will the Government conduct themselves as they did in the previous Parliament, when there was gross insensitivity and ill-feeling created by having a majority of 144?

I recognise that a considerable victory has been achieved. It is bigger than most people have estimated. I have always argued that the 1983 election result was phoney, that the Falklands factor gave the Conservatives a far bigger majority than was actually there. Their true majority was probably about 70 or 75. I thought that, because of that, in one go we could take that majority from the Conservatives in the 1987 election. Now that they have a majority of 101, I am hoist on my own petard. I admit that it is likely that this is in that sense a larger victory than in 1983—*[Interruption.]* I shall not ever join the Tory party. The Home Secretary is indulging in a blue joke when he says that I am going to join the Tory party. He will be in trouble with Mary Whitehouse if he goes on saying things like that. I shall keep probing the Government as a Social Democrat, and proud of it.

In searching for a mechanism to restore the authority of local government—I have already looked at how it is financed—we must make changes. The poll tax is wrong. The Government should re-read the Layfield report and re-examine the case for a local income tax. With

the computerisation of the Inland Revenue, it provides a proper mechanism. The Government's fear is that they do not trust some of the extreme local authorities.

I can almost hear the instinctive groans as I come back to this matter — proportional representation in local government is a different argument from that for the House. I believe that it should come for the House, but let us look at proportional representation for local government on its merits and examine its committee structure. We should recognise this. If it were introduced at one stroke, the extremism would be ended. At one stroke the authority of local government would be restored. We would have a decentralised system of democratic government. I implore the Government to re-examine that issue. Otherwise — this is the hidden message in the Queen's Speech — the Government are embarking, not just on a confrontation with local government, but on the dismantling of local government. If one systematically takes away the powers of local government, what happens? Good people leave local government. Indeed, the Labour party is packing them all in here now.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Not the good people.

Dr. Owen: Perhaps not the good people, but the Left. I have never called such people the loony Left, incidentally. I have always believed that they are highly intelligent, completely dedicated, people who know exactly what they are after and what they are doing. They have decided that it is better to be in the House than in local government. There was a time 50 years ago when people's reputations were made in local government. People did not look to go into Parliament. We need to restore once again the authority of local government. The key to it lies in proportional representation and local income tax.

Let the Government learn for the next four to four and a half years. They have the chance to make this country more prosperous than before. I do not deny that. They have a chance to consolidate. Perhaps there will be a fourth victory. I do not believe that they will achieve it, but they will have much more chance if they show a breadth of vision and a recognition of their role as being much wider than just a majority of 101. If the Government listen to arguments, we shall listen to their replies.

5.47 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): In congratulating my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, her colleagues and our party on their success in the election, I believe that it would be grossly unfair of me not to pay full tribute to the contribution by the Leader of the Opposition and the leaders of the alliance in that process. Their contribution was in all ways remarkable. With regard to the alliance, there never was a credible political arrangement, and it becomes less so now.

As the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said, the leader of the Labour party went back on the policy of his predecessors since Mr. Attlee of having nuclear defence for this country. Although it is often said that no election has been won or lost on defence, there is no doubt that it played a major part in people's reactions all over the country. Therefore, I hope that there can be a return to consensus in defence policies because it will be even more necessary in future than now, for this reason.

We have moved close to the super-powers agreeing on the zero-zero option. If that procedure is carried out, the flexible response for nuclear weapons in the world is removed.

There are those who have always found it difficult to understand the apparent contradiction, that we keep weapons to deter, believing that those weapons will never be used, but it is a fact of life and it has proved successful for the past 40 years. In no way should it be abandoned. If, as the previous commander of NATO said, we move further towards the removal of all nuclear weapons, including those in the field, we shall have returned to the position in 1939, when our conventional forces could not match those of a major European power.

In an attempt by the Soviet Union to take even the smallest sector of Europe, the pressure put on the President of the United States not to use strategic nuclear weapons would be enormous. In fact, it would be irresistible. One can imagine the argument: "Well, it is only a small bit of Europe, a small sector, not really important. Are you prepared to take the risk of destroying so much just to defend those Europeans?" That is the real issue that arises out of the present negotiations. I have always strongly urged and worked for the reduction of nuclear and conventional weapons, and shall continue to do so, but to abandon them would be absolutely fatal.

My right hon. Friend the former Leader of the House, speaking with the wisdom that comes to those who have been relegated to the Back benches, said that the Government would be wise, after this great success, to remember the position of Scotland and Wales; and that it poses a problem for any Government — as it does and will. He did not venture a solution other than that the Procedure Committee should look at it. I do not believe that that Committee will do much good for the problem.

My right hon. Friend then said that there could be no question of looking at devolution again. On that he is absolutely wrong. It is commonly said that we must remain a united kingdom. However, the most successful country in Europe — West Germany — has devolution. We gave it to the West Germans and they have made a success of it. The parrot cry that we must just have a united kingdom bears no relationship to the reality of modern times.

I want to comment on what the Chancellor said. I thought that his peroration was important. He is encouraged by what has been done about the debt of the developing world. It has taken a long time to bring that issue home to international opinion — ever since the Brandt report of 1980 — and particularly to the commercial banks. How much more sensible it would have been if the commercial banks had negotiated long-term arrangements for these developing countries rather than being forced now to put aside large amounts, either because they are a write-off or about to be written off, thereby reducing their capacity to help our indigenous industries here.

It would have been much more sensible to reach a long-term arrangement with the developing countries, but I praise the Chancellor for extending still further the process of writing off the debts of the smaller developing countries, from which there is no hope of ever obtaining repayment. The fact remains that the flow in the past two years has been from developing countries into the developed world, and not vice versa as it has been since 1945. That cannot be justified morally, economically or politically. It remains

[Mr. Edward Heath]

to be dealt with if the world economy is to maintain even its present level of growth, which, overall, is now comparatively small.

In this debate it is only possible to put down markers to one or two items in the Queen's Speech, about which I hope debates will follow. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will bear in mind the need fully to debate some of those subjects.

Little has been said about Northern Ireland. The situation there has existed for 18 ghastly years. No one there who is younger than 30 knows anything other than terrorism and the present condition of Northern Ireland. My view is that the Anglo-Irish Agreement should be activated to a far greater extent. We should not in any way be inhibited by the views of the Ulster Unionists. Lord Attlee's statement—that if one walks out, one has always got to walk back—has been proved right. They walked out; now they have to come back. The Government can press on and use the agreement to the utmost degree to take further action to deal with terrorism in Northern Ireland.

I come now to crime in general. What has been done in the past eight years has failed. We have more crime than ever before and it is still increasing. Our prisons are more and more overcrowded, and crime is particularly a problem of the inner cities. I suggest that there should be an entirely fresh look at the problem of crime, its cause and how to deal with it. The eternal cry, "Send them to prison; send them to prison for longer terms; and for still longer terms," is doing nothing to reduce crime. We owe it to the community to take an entirely fresh look at that, as Rab Butler did when he was Home Secretary. That was many years ago, and it is time we did it again.

Unlike the right hon. Member for Devonport, I am encouraged by the fact that the proposals in the Queen's Speech are all couched in terms that the Government could change, if persuaded to do so. They do not commit themselves to the poll tax: the speech states that fresh arrangements will be made. That gives the Government every opportunity. They are being wise and careful in their every statement. I hope that they will take advantage of every opportunity of accepting advice that we can give them.

As well as taking heed of what has happened in Scotland and Wales, the Government will also be wise to take heed of the views of large numbers of people, including large numbers of our supporters up and down the country on, first, the issue of jobs; secondly, housing; thirdly, health; fourthly, education; and fifthly, the poll tax. I went over most of the country, from Scotland to Cornwall and across to east Kent, and I was able to talk to people unhindered. They told me what they thought. Our people are worried about all of those things, and they supported us despite them.

We have heard a great deal about health. I respect what the right hon. Member for Devonport said, but it is not always quite as simple as he has made out—even though he has great knowledge. The London teaching hospitals do take patients from outside. Guy's takes them from Lincolnshire, with the result that it cannot take my constituents, who are put on the waiting list. Why does Guy's take them from Lincolnshire? They take them because Lincolnshire will pay Guy's for taking its people, and my constituency cannot. That is not a better result

from one of the alliance proposals. It points to what we all know must happen—a reform of the formula for allocating finances within the Health Service. That is vital, and everyone in London and the regional areas around it knows that well.

The abolition of the rating system originated, if I may go so far back into history, in the Conservative manifesto of October 1974, which said:

"within the normal lifetime of a Parliament we shall abolish the domestic rating system and replace it by taxes more broadly based and related to people's ability to pay."

The characteristic of a poll tax is that it is not related to people's ability to pay, nor to the circumstances in different areas of the country. Those are two basic failings of the poll tax, quite apart from the administrative problems. The Secretary of State for the Environment last night said that he believed that it was right that tax should not be related to people's ability to pay. That is not a radical proposal; it is a reactionary, regressive proposal for the tax not be related to people's ability to pay.

The Secretary of State for the Environment dismissed the issue of the register lightly with a flick of the finger last night, but he agreed that the register for the poll tax will, of course, be related to the register for electors, because the register for electors is open to public inspection. Therefore, any register for the poll tax can be compared by any official with the register of electors.

Mr. Marlow: Why not?

Mr. Heath: I shall tell my hon. Friend: because that will persuade people not to put themselves on the register of electors. I have heard my hon. Friend say before that it is a jolly good thing that they are not on the register of electors. I cannot accept that point of view, and I do not believe that the party will, either. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is not even prepared to shake his head.

Those are the reasons why the poll tax is not acceptable. The Government would be wise to reconsider it in the light of the statement in the Queen's Speech. The 1974 manifesto statement pointed to a period—we thought then it was not far ahead—in which the whole of the Inland Revenue system would be computerised, and we could then work the two systems together. Thirteen years afterwards we must be close to the time when the systems can all be computerised and operated together. That is much the best way of dealing with what has been an intractable problem for a long time.

We have heard a great deal about education. I beseech the Secretary of State for Education and Science to consider long and carefully the sketchy outlines of the proposals which he has so far put forward. We have heard a great deal from various sources in the House about Mr. Butler's reform of 1944. Anybody who knows the history of that period knows that years were spent on formulating the Act with both sides of the House involved and with consultation with local authorities, teachers and—the right hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) omitted to say this—with all the churches. They were all consulted and their views were used in formulating that Act.

None of that has been done on this occasion. It may be that we have now reached the stage where, because of a lack of response to our industrial demands, we must have a national curriculum. But let us not justify it on the basis of choice. It will give not greater choice but more limited

choice. It will be fixed by the Secretary of State, and if a Labour Government come to power their Secretary of State will fix it, not ours. The domination of the Secretary of State for Education and Science is an important factor to consider. Hitherto we have always repudiated that.

Has the proposal to devolve more powers, particularly financial powers, to headmasters been examined? Is it thought to be copying the private sector? Probably 70 per cent. of my colleagues went to public schools; I did not have to undergo that. I went to a state infant school, a church primary school, a grammar school and then won a scholarship to Oxford, so I have never had that experience. Does a headmaster of a public school run the finances of the school? Of course not. His job is to run the school. Yet we are telling state school headmasters that they must do a job which public school headmasters would never dream of doing. I know because I have discussed it with them.

Dr. Owen: They have a bursar.

Mr. Heath: Yes, that is what some colleagues have said to me. We have 31,500 state schools. Are we to have 31,500 bursars? That would be the greatest growth interest of the century. Is that what the Chancellor of the Exchequer wants in order to increase his productivity figures? Not for a moment.

A headmaster will have to negotiate with the ladies who come in the morning to clean the school what their pay will be, when their holidays will be and all the other arrangements for them. This measure has not been thought through. That is not the job of a headmaster, and headmasters are not capable of doing it.

What does the option out amount to? We must cast our minds back to the two years which Sir Keith Joseph wasted on vouchers. Various Right-wing organisations said, "Give parents vouchers and they can choose their school." That was impractical nonsense from beginning to end. Indeed, Sir Keith admitted it in a kind letter to me, saying how it was impracticable, but how nice it would have been if it had been practicable. What was the real purpose? It was to give cash vouchers to parents who were already paying for their children at public schools. The vouchers would have been a financial contribution to the cost of sending children to those schools. We all knew that to be the purpose of it. That is why the Government tried to find a way to sell it to the public.

Then there is the argument of giving parents greater choice. In my constituency they have a choice of three schools. We know perfectly well that some schools are fashionable at one time and others at another time, and that parents cannot all get their children into the one school that happens to be fashionable at the time. Chislehurst and Sidcup grammar school is a fine school with a magnificent headmaster and parents want to send their children there, but places are limited. The Government say parents have a choice, but some of them cannot get their first choice. In Safeway we have a choice and whatever we choose we can buy; in education we cannot. Therefore, the comparison now being made in so many Right-wing quarters that education can be sold like goods in a supermarket is absolutely farcical.

Getting schools to opt out is an attempt to open a side door to vouchers. When they opt out, they are responsible directly to the Secretary of State for Education and Science. What influence will a school have over him? In

some education authorities schools may have precious little influence over councillors, but they have some and they have Members of Parliament who can argue for them. These schools will have no influence over the Secretary of State or his Department, so when they do not receive the money they need, they will charge fees. That is what the Prime Minister has always had in mind. With that, fee-paying education will be extended and that is what I am strongly opposed to.

The right hon. Member for Devonport says that he is opposed to selection. We have various types of selection and I do not object to them providing they are properly carried out. However, I object to forcing parents to pay fees for their children's education.

Mr. Marlow: How does my right hon. Friend make that construction?

Mr. Heath: Please do not interrupt. It is just too much to have the hon. Gentleman interrupting. The answer is the simple argument that I have advanced—that when such schools want more money, of which they are deprived by the Department of Education and Science, headmasters will have no alternative but to say to the parents, "Now you will pay fees." That is how it will begin, then it will build up and then we shall be told that fees should be paid in all schools and throughout our education system. To compare this as a great development with what Rab Butler did would make that great man turn in his grave. It is no comparison.

A further worrying aspect is the attempt to make all parents pay for all extra-curricular activities. That is absolutely lamentable. To take as an example music, about which I know a certain amount. This country leads the world in music. That was due after the first world war to the BBC and the promenade concerts and after the second world war largely to the place of music in our education system. When I was president of the European Community youth orchestra, it had 126 members. In my last year after impartial auditions, 86 of them were British. Why? Because of the musical education at our schools, the teaching and the symphony orchestras in which our youth play. I have three symphony orchestras in Sidcup schools alone. Is all that to be wiped away just for a small pittance which the Chancellor will save? Is that why we want another penny off the rate of income tax? Is it to wipe out such culture, visits to foreign countries and so on from our schools?

I must warn the Chancellor and the Secretary of State that many of us feel passionately about these matters and we will not stand idly by and let that happen. That is why I urge that we should have lengthy debates on this. The Government must hear our real views.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: No, I am sorry.

I want to say one word about Europe. I greatly regret that the recent Heads of Government meeting was brought to the conclusion that it was. I believe it was unnecessary because they were prepared to opt for regulations at the December meeting. The way forward would have been to get on with it and for the regulations to be accepted or rejected in December, not to postpone the work of the Community for a further six months. It has been postponed for too long in the past eight years.

[Mr. Heath]

We have agreed the agriculture price review. The cost is said to be the reason why we are challenging the Community's budget, yet we have accepted it. Why? Because we believe it is right. What is more, our farmers have benefited more than anybody in the Community since we joined. We complain about the Community's surpluses, but our farmers are contributing enormously to them. The Government must explain what they will do for our hon. Members who represent agricultural seats whose constituents are producing masses more wheat, beef, other cereals and oil than they ever produced previously. We are continuing to produce surpluses and we must tackle the problem.

The Leader of the Opposition does not deal with the problem by saying that the surpluses must be wiped out. I pay tribute to Mr. Williams for what he did for agriculture in the first Labour Government after the war. He did an enormous amount to improve British agriculture and make it efficient. We went further by going into the Community. To wipe that out bears no relationship to our previous history.

We hear about the reform of the CAP. What is this reform? It has never been proposed by the Labour party or the alliance. What we mean by reform is the adjustment, the rearrangement, of the price ranges for commodities inside the common agricultural policy. As soon as we talk about reform of the common agricultural policy every one of our colleagues in the Community bristles. They all say that Britain wants to wipe away what was an essential part of the foundation of the Community. Until we understand that, we shall not get their full co-operation in making a free market in services and manufactures, which is what we want and which will benefit us.

We should now show constructive leadership in Europe and should not take any relish in saying that we held it up and that we stood alone. That is not a demonstration of strength; it is a demonstration of weakness and shows that we are not prepared to work with our colleagues in finding an answer to the problems. Our future lies in Europe and the challenge now is to Europe. Europe is not meeting it and one of the things that worries most of us is that budgetary control is just a back-door way of cutting back on scientific research in Europe. That is what is happening and it is the British who are obstructing such research and creating uncertainty in so many ventures.

If we are to succeed in the world and outdo the Japanese instead of going protectionist on them and getting the Americans to do likewise, we must have common science and research in Europe and must provide the budget for it. I urge the Government to do that. I have put down a few markers.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who no doubt has now gone off to a meeting of the 1922 Committee, said that we are in for a lively Session. We are, and we can get the right results from that Session if the Chancellor and his colleagues will listen to the views of those who care deeply about these affairs and who want to see progress being made. But many of us are not prepared to go into a reactionary regressive policy of any kind.

6.11 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I rise to make my first contribution, and I thank you, Mr.

Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to do so on an issue which is of such great importance to my constituency. I know that in my first contribution my constituents would want me to pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Bob Brown, and I do so with real affection and respect.

Bob Brown was first elected to this House in 1966 and represented Newcastle, West until 1983. Between 1983 and 1987 he represented the new Newcastle upon Tyne, North constituency that I now represent. He was a highly popular representative and was held in the highest regard, not only in the city of Newcastle but throughout the northern region. He has had a lifetime of service to the community as a city councillor and alderman and served the nation as Under-Secretary of State for Transport from 1968 to 1970, as Under-Secretary of State for Social Services in 1974 and as Under-Secretary of State for Defence between 1974 and 1979.

As an Army Minister and an ex-sapper, Bob Brown was in a real sense fully equipped to supervise the training of recruits. I have it on good account that this pleased the recruits and surprised the non-commissioned officers. I am also told that the very idea that a Labour army Minister had handled an Enfield 303 had the Army chiefs of staff quaking in their flak jackets.

My constituency is in the north-west of the city and covers the older industrial communities of Newburn, Lemington and Westerhope and the post-war settlements of Denton, Chapel Park, Newbiggin Hall and Fawdon the villages north of the city, and the better-off areas which line the Great North road north of Gosforth.

The constituency was a proud workshop community. The people there extracted coal from the banks of the Tyne and served not only local industry but industry in the south. That workshop community manufactured engineering and glass products and exported them all over the world. It processed steel at Spencers to serve local industry and gave George Stephenson his first chance as a plugman in Throckley pit. The job might now be known as that carried out by a foreman. The community constructed the first railway line in Britain between Colodge and Kenton even before George Stephenson's time and in the post-war era it established new engineering and allied industries.

In his first speech in the House in 1966, Bob Brown spoke about the link between people's skills and economic well-being. He said:

"As surely as the prosperity of the nation was built on the skills of the industrial workers of the North following the Industrial Revolution, we are again in the position of being able greatly to enhance the national prospects with the contribution which we can offer in the years ahead." — [Official Report, 26 April 1966; Vol. 727, c. 587.]

It must be obvious not only to Bob Brown but to all of his former constituents that such hopes have not materialised. In the 1980s people in my constituency and in the north as a whole have not been allowed to make that contribution. Between 1979 and 1986, 171,000 jobs have been lost in the north. Unemployment has doubled, one in five of the people in my constituency is out of work and in areas like the New Biggin Hall estate, with a population approaching 8,000, 44 per cent. of the men have no work.

Between 1979 and 1986, 140,000 jobs have been lost in manufacturing in the north. In my constituency 600 have been lost at Lemington Glass, 800 at Ever-Ready and 600 at Tress Engineering. After eight years of Conservative Government, my constituency now has a workless community in which young people have very little prospect

of a real job and where everyone knows that there are people who are now in their late twenties who have never worked.

In that workless community 32-year-olds are told by the local employment office that they are too old ever to work again. It is no surprise that they feel alienated and outlawed by our society. Even in the more prosperous areas like Chapel Park and Gosforth people are terrified that their children will not get the opportunity to work in the locale. That despair is aggravated by growing poverty, deteriorating housing and a neglect of the areas blighted by urban dereliction.

People in my constituency and in the north of England are asking, "Can we take any comfort from the proposals in the Gracious Speech or from the idea that we should sell off schools, break up our water industry and dismantle local authority services?" Can they take any comfort from the prospect of paying higher rates through the poll tax? What comfort can people take from the inner-city proposals?

Previous Labour Governments recognised that the problems that afflict the inner city cannot be tackled without intervention by both central and local government. I freely concede to Conservative Members and to the Secretary of State for the Environment that the Government have now rightly acknowledged that that is the case. Such intervention is necessary, even if it runs counter to their economic theories, and they recognise that the free market can make no real impact on inner city problems.

The Government introduced a number of schemes designed to intervene and to assist the cities. They are the partnership scheme, the programme, areas in receipt of urban development grant, the task force and now the urban development corporations. Those schemes are fraudulent because they mask what is happening in our cities. They expose the hypocrisy of the Government's claim that they care and that they can do something.

The Government claim that their approach can create jobs and begin the process of regeneration in our inner cities, but an examination of what is happening in the cities and of what is happening in Tyneside shows how false this is. Newcastle district council lost £187 million in cumulative block grant between 1981-82 and 1986-87 at 1986 prices, yet it received only £112 million in partnership finance over the same period and calculated on the same basis. Because of the impact of rate capping, that has meant that £75 million for city services has been lost including the possibility of urban renewal.

In a report published this month, the Institution of Civil Engineers has estimated that a real job in the construction industry providing a real service to the community costs, in net terms, £12,870. That includes design costs, other overheads and profit. On that basis, the £75 million cut in real support has deprived the city of Newcastle of 1,000 jobs each year for the past five years. It has also meant the loss of the services and the potential redevelopment that could have been provided by those jobs. Parts of my constituency, such as Newburn and Lemington, are outside the designated partnership areas. They lose out doubly. Not only do they lose their share of the reduced block grant, but they do not qualify for any partnership money. We see the same picture in north and south Tyneside, which have lost £12 million and £5 million respectively in block grant over the same period.

What hope, then, can people have in Tyneside in the urban development corporations? Their projected funding, cumulatively over the next five years, is £52.4 million. That does not even compensate for the loss of block grant in Newcastle and north and south Tyneside. By 1989 or 1990, those areas will have fewer real resources to tackle the deep and severe problems that they face than they had in 1981-82, when the Government began their various partnership schemes.

The Secretary of State for the Environment wrote to me on 9 April confirming that Newcastle's application for derelict land grant to clear the Percy pit site in my constituency had been rejected. I wanted to ask the Secretary of State about that today, but as he is not here, I am prepared to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who I know will be back later. In the light of the proposals in the Gracious Speech, will the Government let my constituents know whether they will now provide the funding to include Newburn in Lemington and the territory covered by the urban development corporation on Tyne and Wear? If not, are the Government prepared to provide additional funding to tackle the problem of the Percy pit site?

A telling view on the urban development corporations is expressed in *Chartered Surveyors Weekly*. It says that the idea that an urban development corporation should have undiluted power to flatten buildings and override unco-operative local authorities is clearly undemocratic, and that making plans in London to deal with the problems of Manchester, Leeds or wherever is misguided and ignores the clear lesson of the general election that people north of Birmingham see their problems differently from the Government. They should be given the resources to sort out those problems for themselves. That is solid advice from the real practitioners of urban renewal.

The people of the north are practical and down-to-earth people, who can distinguish false claim from reality. They know that, however special assistance is dressed up, if the net result is less available funding, less redevelopment will take place. The people of the north know that, if fewer resources are available, fewer jobs will be on offer to the 25,000 without work in the city of Newcastle. Like the Institution of Chartered Surveyors, they know that whatever misgivings they may have about their local authority, that council is more likely to understand local needs and respond to them. They know that, unless the manufacturing base of our city is rebuilt and we begin to attract and create new high-tech jobs, no amount of special assistance will tackle the real problems that our cities face. They know that everyone cannot work at the now famous Metro centre, because they know that some of us have actually got to make the things that we sell and consume. They know that it is sheer hypocrisy for the Government to claim that they can stimulate an enterprise culture when they give so little money to the northern development company set up by all parties in the north, and when they reject the establishment of a northern development agency.

The people of the north know that the Government have no record of support for them, and that only a sustained fight for jobs and for our cities by the whole northern community can hope to extract — however grudgingly — any assistance. The people of the north know in their hearts that they must permanently campaign

[Mr. Doug Henderson]

and fight for real change in Government policy. I know that too, and I am with them 100 per cent., in the House and in the wider community.

6.25 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for calling me to make my maiden speech. First, may I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) on his maiden speech, which was made with great passion. I hope that I shall be able to follow it with some thoughts of my own.

Let me make an observation about my past. In the general elections of 1979 and 1983 when I stood unsuccessfully as Conservative candidate in Stepney and Poplar and then in Southwark and Bermondsey, I wondered whether I should ever stand here to make my maiden speech. Therefore, as well as thanking you, Mr. Speaker, for calling me, I thank the electors of Harrow, West for allowing me to stand here.

Sir John Betjeman described part of my constituency as "the serried avenues of Harrow's garden villages". I think that aptly describes a beautiful part of greater London. My eminent predecessor, Sir John Page, used a similar line in many speeches, describing Harrow, West as being truly the garden of England. Jack Page, as everyone knew him, represented Harrow, West for 27 years, having won the seat in a by-election in 1960 after the tragic death of his predecessor, and successfully defended it in seven elections. It is my firm belief that he will be missed here, as he will be in Harrow, West because of his generosity of spirit. He was generous to his colleagues and to me as his successor, and he was kind and thoughtful in his advice. He was generous in the help, advice and care that he gave to his constituents, and assiduous in his work for the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which became the centre of his political efforts in his last few years in the House.

Harrow, West represents the London suburbs at their best. It is Metroland as described by Sir John Betjeman, although I am not sure whether it is Metroland as described by Evelyn Waugh. The different parts of the constituency have their different characters. The village of Pinner—and it retains its village character, despite the developers and despite too many office blocks and supermarkets—is characterised by the annual Pinner fair, granted under royal charter by Henry III in 1336 and kept going bravely by the people of Pinner throughout the war. It is still a thriving and successful fair today.

Probably the most famous part of my constituency is Harrow on the Hill. At the top of the hill is the famous Harrow school, which has sent so many of its famous sons to this House; at the bottom is the much less famous Harrow college of technology where I was educated, if "educated" is the word. That too has a proud record. I do not include myself, but I do include the many successful designers and film makers who went there. Excellence in education in Harrow is not confined just to Harrow on the Hill. Harrow's maintained schools provide an education of proven excellence. I freely pay tribute to my political friends who run Harrow council for the excellent work that they have done to ensure that Harrow has the proven best examination results in the country. Even if one discounts the prevailing social pressures in the London borough of Harrow, they are still the best examination results in the country.

One reason for that success is that in 1977 Harrow council led the way in giving parents, headmasters and governing bodies a real voice and real power. It is a model of what can be achieved if we trust parents. Running through the opposition to the education proposals in the Gracious Speech is a lack of trust in parents who live in the inner cities. It is a very negative and a deeply insulting approach to those parents who care desperately about the future of their children and the education that they receive. However, they are powerless against the education authorities in the inner cities, particularly in inner London and in Brent, which is next door to my constituency. The proposals in the Gracious Speech will lead to those parents having the power to do something to help their children.

I welcome in particular the inner-city initiatives that are contained in the Gracious Speech, especially those that relate to housing. I wish to say a few words about housing, particularly about housing in greater London. The Opposition say that we have broken the old consensus on housing. That is true. I thoroughly welcome the fact that we have broken the consensus. The old consensus on housing—competition to see how many council houses could be built, how quickly and how cheaply, never mind the quality—has been dead for a long time in most people's eyes, apart from those of a few politicians. The reality is that mass solutions, or a mass approach to housing, does not work.

We have to conclude, sadly, that much of the money that was poured into housing in the 1950s and the 1960s has been badly spent and wasted. Consequently, bad housing has been provided. Tenants had no control over their future. They were powerless. They have been unable to help their sons and daughters to live in the same area. They have also been powerless to do anything about the terrible backlog of repairs, and it has led to pitifully unbalanced communities. Many of the young and the able have voted with their feet. They have moved out of the inner cities, even though all that they wanted to do was to stay near their families who had lived there for generations.

A new consensus has been created. Central to that consensus has been the sale of council houses and council flats, and it has changed permanently the face of housing for many families. I do not take the view that people's ability to own their own homes has reached saturation level. Many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people could be helped to own their own homes. I very much hope that the Government will provide them with that opportunity during the lifetime of this Parliament.

It is particularly important that the old council estate monopolies should be broken up. Many council estates provide bad housing. People are trapped in those estates and want to move out of them, or they want variety to be provided. Why should a council tenant not live next door to somebody who rents his home privately, or who owns his own home? That provides variety, and people then stop saying, "It is only a council estate." It is not only Conservative Members who say that; I have heard Opposition Members say it, too. We need to be proud of each part of our localities.

Part of the answer would be to use a large number of small solutions. Local authorities should free their land banks, recognise that young people want to buy their own homes, bring in private developers and the building societies and help council tenants to buy collectively their estates. We have no right to deny to people what most, if

not all, hon. Members regard as proper for themselves: that they should have the opportunity to buy their own homes.

I ask the Government to consider three areas that should receive attention. The first is the private rented sector. That is the only way that mobility of labour can be achieved. It was a terrible own goal when we virtually got rid of the private rented sector. Of course there were problems. I read in the history books about the problems of *Rachmanism*, but I do not believe that this Government would do anything that would lead to the return of the terrible problems that faced powerless private tenants. Those people can be and must be protected by law.

Secondly, I had the privilege to serve on the Greater London council in the days when it was led by my good friend Sir Horace Cutler, also from Harrow, West, who pioneered homesteading. Why is it that in our inner cities, where so much use is made of bed-and-breakfast accommodation, there are so many empty council flats? Why is it that so many blocks of flats are boarded up and unused? Many young people would like to move into those flats and use their money, time, energy and drive to make them into wonderful places in which to live. That happened during the years of the Conservative-led Greater London council. The Government could give a lead now and ensure that that happened nationally. I am certain that those who have so restricted choice for the people who live in the inner cities will never provide them with choice, unless the Government make them do so.

Thirdly, we must seek a new role for local authorities. The main problem is that too often local authorities have regarded themselves as the only providers of housing, as the only people who can reach solutions. Their job is to ensure that each individual on their waiting list who wants a home receives the help that he needs. They must ensure that the land banks are used to build new housing. The local authorities cannot provide all the solutions themselves. A huge shift in perception by local authorities will be needed, but it can be done—if a lead is given by the Government.

A decent home is at the core of proper family life, but mass, quick, all-embracing solutions have had their day. They have failed the people of this country. The Government's great success over council house sales is only the start, if we are to create one nation in housing and one nation of well-housed people. That is what I look for and that is what I believe the Government will go a long way towards providing in this Parliament.

6.39 pm

Mr. James Molyneux (Lagan Valley): I pay a sincere tribute to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) on his maiden speech, and I join my hon. Friends on this Bench in paying tribute to his predecessor, Bob Brown, who was a Defence Minister at a fairly critical time in the affairs of Northern Ireland. We were impressed by the case that the hon. Member made for the constituency that he has inherited and we wish him all the best as a Member of Parliament.

I congratulate also the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on his speech. The picture that he presented was of a very different constituency, with a different social status and conditions, different levels of unemployment and so on. We can all share in his praise for his

predecessor, Jack Page, and from what we have heard from the hon. Gentleman today we can be confident that he will prove to be a worthy successor.

I hope that there will be no irritation at the intervention of an Ulster Unionist Member in a debate on the use of national resources. I had intended to qualify that by saying that irritation would be felt by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). He is the exception. He launched an unprovoked attack on the members of my party and, with the bitterness that he customarily displays towards the members of his own party, he finds it impossible to forget or forgive the ballot box rejection by the people of Northern Ireland of an even more ludicrous initiative that he brought forward—the Sunningdale agreement of 1974. But we all know what makes the right hon. Gentleman tick. We understand all about that, so we will not judge him too harshly.

On the first day of the debate on the Loyal Address the Prime Minister refuted claims that she had no mandate to govern Scotland and Wales. She declared:

"That is absurd. We are the United Kingdom, and I hope we shall remain a United Kingdom".—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1987; Vol. 118, c. 61.]

I shall not challenge the right of the Prime Minister to govern all the component parts of the United Kingdom so long as she retains the confidence of this House, and this House alone. In fact, my party would go even further and say that she and her Government have the exclusive right, under the authority of the Crown, to govern the United Kingdom and all the parts thereof. If the Prime Minister's claim to the exclusive right to govern the United Kingdom is to be convincing, and if it is to be sustained, it must logically rule out the right of any foreign Government to assist or participate in governing any part of the United Kingdom.

The designers of the Anglo-Irish Agreement used to argue that there was no joint authority, that the ministerial conference merely considered and discussed matters. However, it is now clear that it does far more than that. It actually makes decisions. It is interesting that that is no longer denied, nor can it be denied, in the light of the disclosure of the then Minister of State, the hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), who, on 10 August 1986, while Parliament was in recess, announced in a United Kingdom radio interview a list of matters that "have been agreed". Those were the words. They were not proposals that were to be considered; they were matters that had been decided and agreed. It was only on the following day, perhaps after he had received a gentle slap on the wrist, that he grudgingly conceded that Parliament had some role in the matter after all. It was not until some seven months later that Parliament was informed—not consulted—and the items agreed with the Irish Government while Parliament was in recess were slapped on the Table of the House in the form of Orders in Council.

In earlier debates I have tried to be more charitable than others towards the Prime Minister: I never asserted that she was allowed fully to comprehend what lay behind all the bland phrases of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Had the agreement been drafted as a legal document, she, as a competent lawyer, would have been able to judge the significance of what she was signing. But, as we know, the Anglo-Irish Agreement was drafted in political language, which has the great beauty and benefit of enabling politicians to interpret its meaning to suit their own aspirations and preferences.

[Mr. James Molyneux]

I suspect that the Prime Minister has learnt much from that experience, and my instinct is confirmed by an article by Richard Owen, writing from Brussels, in *The Times* today. He says:

"Mrs. Thatcher adamantly refused to be 'bounced'. Mr. Charles Haughey, the Irish Prime Minister—also on cool terms with Mrs. Thatcher—joined the attack, remarking that if she did not sign 'we will be here all night.'"

The article continues:

"Mrs. Thatcher, faced with this sudden pressure, angrily refused to cave in, and the summit headed downhill into a bad-tempered impasse."

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup deplored that state of affairs. He was in favour of caving in and compromise, but, to her eternal credit, the Prime Minister flatly refused to have anything to do with it.

The heading of that article in *The Times* was rather striking. It reads,

"How Thatcher avoided being bounced."

That heading comes two years after the right hon. Lady was bounced into signing the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I suppose that history will reveal who did the bouncing, but now, in an unassailable position, and confidently entering into her third term, the Prime Minister is clearly not going to be bounced again.

By way of light relief, I refer to a comical little passage in the article in *The Times*. Referring to the mood of bitterness in Brussels on Tuesday, Richard Owen records:

"Even Sir Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign Secretary, was said to be dismayed ('shaking with anger' was one observation)."

The cause of the Foreign Secretary's dismay is not made very clear. I wonder whether he was dismayed by the attitude of the 11, or by the Prime Minister's refusal to compromise, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup would have liked her to do, but the fact remains that the Foreign Secretary shaking with anger must have been worth seeing. I suppose that if the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) had been in the Chamber he would have improved on an earlier joke and drawn an analogy with jellied mutton.

This is the day of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. On occasions, he has had the support of right hon. and hon. Members on this Bench, notably that of my friend and colleague the right hon. Enoch Powell, who fearlessly spoke up for what he judged to be right, be it popular or unpopular. His absence from the parliamentary scene is a cause of deep regret—a regret that is felt in all parts of the House, but most keenly by those who were privileged to work with him in good times and in bad times.

The Chancellor and his colleagues, with their trusteeship of our national resources, and those who assist them in the Treasury, rightly set great store by accountability. Before I came to Parliament I often led deputations to various spending Ministers. Invariably, their response was, "Yes. You have put a very good case for increased funds, but I shall have great difficulty getting it past the Treasury." That implies no criticism of Treasury Ministers—they are only doing their job—but it leads me to wonder why there is so little success in enlisting the support of Irish Prime Ministers in battles fought by the First Lord of the Treasury himself and the Chancellor and his Treasury colleagues against extravagance and waste of resources by the EEC. If Her Majesty's Government concede to Dublin Governments the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the United Kingdom in a manner for

which there is no precedent or model anywhere in the Western world, why is the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic allowed to gang up with our opponents in Europe and, indeed, in the United Nations? Surely the present situation is nothing short of a scandal, and is not the claim to a "unique relationship" and talk about "the totality of relationships" something of a fraud?

Finally, I draw the attention of Treasury Ministers to another unnecessary drain on our national resources—the maintenance of the joint authority, or Dublin diktat, apparatus. First, there are the ludicrous arrangements for meetings of the joint chairmen in Northern Ireland. There is the winching down from helicopters of Dublin Ministers to the Stormont compound behind the barbed wire and the excessive use of police and Army personnel to ensure that our foreign governors are not exposed to any irritation or annoyance from those who bitterly resent their presence. Secondly, there is the round-the-clock protection of the bunker that houses the joint secretariat at Maryfield, in which the joint rule mechanism is sheltered and isolated from those whose destinies they shape.

Let me be so bold as to suggest that at the end of this final day of the debate on the Loyal Address the Chancellor, as guardian of the national financial resources, might send a minute to the Foreign Office, copied to the Northern Ireland Office, simply asking whether expenditure on this unwanted and unloved regime is really necessary.

6.52 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): I am glad to congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) on his maiden speech. He spoke with feeling about his predecessor, Mr. Bob Brown, who was a good friend of many in the House, and with considerable passion about the problems of his constituency. The hon. Gentleman may have gone close to breaching the convention that maiden speeches should not be controversial, but perhaps that is because that convention is increasingly breached.

I particularly congratulate and welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) who made an excellent maiden speech. He has arrived here the hard way, in view of the previous elections he has fought. Given the constituency that he represents, he spoke relevantly about education and with considerable expertise on the subject of housing. As a graduate of the Harrow college of technology he will undoubtedly bring to the House, on matters technological, expertise that perhaps is not as widespread on the Benches as it should be. My hon. Friend spoke with a convincing and cogent style, and I have no doubt that in the future we shall listen to him with great pleasure, as I am sure the entire House did this evening.

The subject of the debate is the allocation of resources. I congratulate the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who has been on the Government Bench throughout much of the debate. He has an extremely difficult task ahead of him. Over time, the Government policy has changed from one of reducing public expenditure in real terms, to maintaining it in real terms, to simply reducing it as a percentage of GNP. Given the tremendous claims on public resources that are now before us, after the election and contained in the Gracious Speech, the Chief

Secretary's task will not be easy. However, it is vitally important that we maintain control over public expenditure.

Within the total determined, the allocation between Departments is in many ways the real battleground. In that context, the changes made to our parliamentary procedures since 1979 have done something to redress the balance between the Executive and Parliament with the establishment of the Estimates Day procedure and the departmentally related Select Committees. Those innovations are helpful in assessing the priorities between different spending Departments, because the departmental Committees have the task of monitoring Departments and assessing what their claims on the Treasury ought to be.

I therefore hope that those Committees will be established with the least possible delay. In its first report in the 1984-85 Session, the Liaison Committee drew attention to the delay that occurred after the last general election. It pointed out that between 15 June 1983 and the time when the Committees were established, there was a considerable delay. In fact, those Committees were not set up until mid-December. The Liaison Committee believed that that delay was excessive, because for some six months the House was deprived of the valuable input that those Committees can make. I therefore very much welcome the statement by the Leader of the House during business questions today that he intends to help in the establishment of those Committees at the earliest possible moment.

Of course I understand that there may be problems about appointment to those Committees, but I am glad that the Committee of Selection has already been established. It is clearly difficult to go ahead with such selection until we know what happens within the Labour party, but I understand that elections to the Shadow Cabinet will take place soon. It should therefore be possible to reach a decision on the composition of those Committees and get them into operation before the summer recess. It is important to do so, since otherwise the delay will be considerable and the Committees will be unable to work out their programmes and complete some of the important reports that were initiated in the last Parliament. I hope that every effort will be made to establish them as quickly as possible. Certainly as many as possible should be established before the recess. Any problem that may arise with the minor parties about composition ought not to delay that. No doubt difficult negotiations will take place, but it is important that they should be quick.

There is a clear case where the establishment of a Select Committee is necessary. I refer to the events of the last 48 hours. The Treasury and Civil Service Committee, which I had the honour of chairing in the last Parliament, produced a series of reports on the way in which the financial arrangements between this country and the European Community were developing. Those reports were not only helpful to the House but to the Government as well, because these matters are extremely complex and it is not possible to ascertain precisely what is going on by questioning across the Floor of the Chamber.

On this subject, perhaps above all, it is necessary for Select Committees to have the opportunity of cross-examining Ministers in depth to discover the exact position. In the last Parliament the report on the Fontainebleau agreement and a series of others highlighted the real problems that arise in relation to

budgetary discipline. Yesterday the Prime Minister recognised that the arrangements that have been made were not sufficiently watertight to ensure that effective budgetary discipline was imposed.

Having said that, two aspects of what the Prime Minister said give considerable cause for concern. She seemed to be saying that she would contemplate a further increase in the EEC's resources if there were a guarantee of budgetary discipline. The House should recall that it was persuaded to agree to the increase in own resources from 1 per cent. of the VAT to 1.4 per cent. on the grounds that there would be effective budgetary discipline. It would be quite wrong to pay the price twice to achieve the same objective simply because the agreement was not watertight in the first place and was not made legally enforceable, as the Select Committee at the time said it ought to be. That is a very important aspect of the allocation of our resources.

No case has been made for any increase in agricultural support through the CAP. No such case has been put to us. This should be looked at carefully, and that is an important reason why these Committees should be established as soon as possible.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has taken a sensible and realistic line on the EEC, but it is extremely difficult for her, with complete justification, to continue saying no meeting after meeting. The danger is that—this happened when the Fontainebleau agreement was set out—sooner or later the issue is fudged. Anything that the House can do to reinforce my right hon. Friend in sticking to her guns and ensuring a sensible outcome to the negotiations is of considerable importance.

I welcome the point that the Chancellor of the Exchequer made with regard to Third world debt. In the election campaign, those people who told church meetings and meetings of those who were concerned with Third world problems that the Conservative party did not care should have listened more carefully to what was being said before and during the election. Particularly, they should have listened this afternoon to the Chancellor's attitude to the Third world debt problem. The Treasury Committee reported in depth on this matter, not least with regard to the provision that should be made by commercial banks. That report was prescient in many ways, but it did not receive sufficient attention.

Therefore, I stress to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the importance of looking at some of the detailed arguments that we put forward, particularly with regard to the way in which, and the extent to which, the additional provisions that are taken by the commercial banks can be used against tax allowances. It seems that there is a random, arbitrary way in which those provisions are allowed for tax and the scope of the allowances. I think that he will need to look at that matter.

Local government finance and expenditure accounts for about a quarter of total Government expenditure and is a matter of great importance. In the course of the election campaign I sought to spell out the community charge in considerable detail to my constituents. Subsequently, this matter has generated an increasing amount of controversy.

My view has long been that the rating system is incapable of reform. It is fundamentally flawed and I believe that we were right in previous elections to say that we would get rid of it. We are right to say that we shall get rid of it now. It is worth remembering that about half of

[Mr. Terence Higgins]

the total of local government expenditure comes from the central Exchequer, and of the remainder about half—some 25 per cent.—comes from industry. The domestic rate covers about a quarter of total expenditure. One could argue that one should simply abolish the rating system and transfer the cost to the central Exchequer. It may be said that that is removing the basis of local democracy, but that has already been eroded to the extent of some 75 per cent., and many of the measures that have been necessary to prevent the profligate expenditure of some local authorities have eroded local government autonomy.

The main argument against that might be the amount of unemployment that it would create with regard to the valuation, collection and rebating of rates. But that is not the solution that the Government have come up with. They have come up with a proposal for a community charge, which is a sensible development.

The Leader of the Opposition, in opening the debate, stressed the importance of no taxation without representation. I think that the House would unanimously go along with that view. One must recognise that at a local level there are considerable dangers in representation without taxation. At the moment, many people are voting for policies and candidates that will involve vast increases in local expenditure, knowing full well that it will not cost them a penny. That is not sensible, it is a recipe for gross extravagance. We must recall that of the 35 million people who form the local electorate about 17 million do not pay rates.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the right hon. Gentleman moving to the conclusion that we should reverse the expansion of the franchise which, for over 150 years, has been based on the right to vote regardless of one's financial position?

Mr. Higgins: The right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I am not suggesting that. I am saying that it is unreasonable that a substantial number of people, not necessarily those who are poor but those who live in households with a large number of members, should pay nothing towards the cost of local garbage collection, street lighting or whatever. Why should they get those services free? It is perfectly sensible that they should not. I am not arguing for what the right hon. Gentleman suggested, but it is reasonable that those who make use of and place a burden on public services should make some contribution towards their cost. That would not involve paying the full amount because we are only talking about a quarter of the total expenditure.

I do not believe that a local income tax would improve accountability. The idea that power to impose income tax should be given to some of the local authorities that have been so profligate is not something that I would view with great equanimity.

It has been suggested that the community charge would be phased in over a period of three to 10 years. That is likely to be wasteful because there would be a vast duplication of the bureaucracy that is involved in collecting the tax. Therefore, it seems that the argument for phasing should be, regarded with considerable suspicion. I believe that it would be right to make the change as straightforward as possible, having agreed on the arguments about it.

Two of the most central matters in the election campaign were local government finance and education. We should recognise that the cost of education, particularly teachers' salaries, is increasingly becoming a national matter. In the negotiations on teachers' salaries that has increasingly become so. It is an important component of local government expenditure and it accounts for about 25 per cent. of local government expenditure.

The transition from rates to a community charge will impose a burden on some people who previously have not paid rates and who will pay for services that previously they have been receiving free. If we are to ameliorate that transition there may be a case for transferring the cost from the local authorities to the central Exchequer. To that extent there may be an amelioration of what would otherwise be a difficult transitional period and it may result in a more sensible allocation of our resources.

The allocation of resources will become increasingly important in this new Parliament. The Treasury Committee, to which I have referred, has collected a lot of evidence from virtually all Departments on how they see their plans developing over the next 10 years. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, in his immensely difficult task, will take account of that evidence. As yet the Committee has not had a chance to report on it, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will not necessarily assume that, as to the spending of individual Departments, it is right to make marginal adjustments and that the super-tanker in each Department floats onwards with little deviation.

At this stage of the Parliament we should make a fundamental review of the priorities that need to be reassessed. If a particular Department finds that it needs more or that it justifies an increase in the public expenditure that should not necessarily be met by a cut in the same Department. The problem is that matters have come to departmentalised and if there is to be an increase in the Department it must find a saving. That is not necessarily the right way to allocate resources.

I believe that, overall, the Queen's Speech contains a constructive programme which forms a firm basis for a third term of Conservative Government and which I believe will prove a success.

7.10 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I appreciate the opportunity to deliver my maiden speech on the Loyal Address. I am privileged to stand here on behalf of the people of Dumbarton, where I was born and raised and in which I have lived all my life. The constituency has been well served by its representatives in this Chamber, not least by my predecessor, Ian Campbell, a most courteous and considerate man who was an excellent constituency Member for 17 years. My opinion of my predecessor is reinforced by contact with hon. Members.

In many ways the Dumbarton constituency forms a transitional zone between the essentially urban districts of industrial Clydeside and the Highland district of Argyll. Situated in the main communication arteries between the river Clyde and Loch Lomond, the constituency has a unique location as the gateway to the Highlands. It contains a wealth of different landscapes with features including mountains, moorlands, hills and fresh water lochs. Not least is the world renowned bonnie banks of Loch Lomond, which by itself is an incalculable asset for both constituents and visitors alike.

The town of Dumbarton was made a royal borough by Alexander II in 1222. Several other charters were granted to the borough by succeeding sovereigns and they were confirmed by a charter under James VI dated 13 December 1609. At about that time the town was much damaged by floods, so much so that application was made to this Parliament for a sum of money to enable magistrates to do something to prevent the town being entirely destroyed. Today it is on a similar venture that the people of Dumbarton have sent me to Parliament.

There is much to be done for a constituency which over the past seven or eight years has seen unemployment levels double and poverty levels treble—a constituency where the indices of socio-economic disparity between the three main conurbations prove to me that the north-south divide exists, as the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) reminded us earlier in the week in his maiden speech.

But in my area the divide is burnished in the mind. There is a daily reminder of the reality of life in an area which is increasingly neglected by national policies. It is a constituency where within a few miles of each other grotesque comparison can be made between Loch Lomond, one of nature's most beautiful spectacles, and the Trident submarines at the Clyde submarine base at Gairloch. This is a testimony to man's potential depravity and a witness to man's possible inhumanity to man. Over £10 million has been invested in the project, which is commonly referred to as a weapon of last resort. At the same time, there is nothing on offer to the 6,000 or so unemployed people in my area. These are the people of primary resort who are offered no hope of a job or a future by present Government policies.

I could become overawed by the history of this House by invoking the names of the many great people who have graced this Chamber and by dwelling on the life and death dramas conducted within these very walls. However, I shall not allow myself such indulgence. Today I am here to discern the relevance of the Queen's Speech for the constituents of Dumbarton.

I am reminded that the Conservative party claims to be the party of the family. What do the Government plan to do to support the family? What do they offer to the grandparents in Dumbarton who, as pensioners, are £11 a week worse off as a result of breaking the link between earnings and pensions in 1980? It was said by Government spokespersons at the time that it would not happen, but it is merely another example of the hidden agenda pursued since 1979.

What do the Government intend to do to support parents when the housing stock is deteriorating before their very eyes because of the cumulative withdrawal of £650 million from the housing revenue account in Scotland? What will they do to support the young persons who leave school and are faced with conscription to the YTS or else begin their journey into adulthood in abject poverty?

Will the Government undertake to finance and give sound support to the parents, teachers and pupils of our state schools instead of promulgating a "pay as you learn" philosophy as implied in the Gracious Speech? Will they support the family which has to pay the impending poll tax—a system rejected universally by all democracies and, even this week, by former Ministers such as the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and a former Prime

Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) who uttered these very sentiments this evening?

Whom does the poll tax benefit? It certainly does not benefit a substantial majority of my constituents. It will not even benefit the fledgling share-owning democracy. It will benefit Government supporters because they do not see their future as being tied up in the public services. To such individuals, state schools, National Health Service facilities and local authority provision such as social work and libraries are of secondary importance. To those people I say, "Go on a train, go to the local hospital, send your children to state schools, because then you will have a stake in the nation's public services."

The hidden message of the Gracious Speech is that the dismantling of the public services and the bludgeoning of collective provision are the measures which face us over the life of this Parliament. To people who do not rely on these services, private affluence is the only reality because they steadfastly refuse to recognise the public squalor which many people in Britain must now endure.

The debate on the use of national resources should signal that the time for pious statements has passed. Now is the time for action. A heavy burden lies on this legislative body to ensure that Government rhetoric about the family and about choice, freedom and people's needs is indeed translated into action.

7.19 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on his powerful and forceful maiden speech. I am sure that when we cross swords in future we shall have a lot to say. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), whom I have known for very many years, on his very powerful and forceful speech. He spoke from the heart on issues about which he knows a lot.

As a Conservative, I am a strong believer in traditions, especially traditions that are useful and valuable. I am especially grateful today for those traditions connected with maiden speeches. I am told that they should be relatively non-controversial and heard without interruption. As a former history teacher, I recall what happened to Benjamin Disraeli in 1837 when he did not follow that injunction and was forced to sit down. I hope that on this occasion I shall be heard in silence.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): What did he say?

Mr. Bennett: My mentioning Disraeli is not a coded message meaning that I am on that wing of the party.

For all of us who are fresh from the hustings and by nature political animals, it is difficult to follow any injunction that tells us that we ought to be uncontroversial. However, I shall do my best to follow that practice, although it is especially difficult for a Member who represents Pembroke. The constituency has a long tradition of independent spirit. Both the last two Members of Parliament, Nicholas Edwards, and Desmond Donnelly before him, showed considerable determination in defending constituency interests. That is a tradition that I intend to follow.

I am especially grateful for the opportunity to pay tribute to Nicholas Edwards. Although a member of the Cabinet and extremely busy right up until polling day, he

[Mr. Bennett]

gave me a great deal of personal help and showed me great personal kindness. Together with his wife, Ann, he lent me his home in Pembrokeshire throughout my time as the prospective parliamentary candidate. As a constituency Member, Nick was able to help many thousands of people through his constituency surgeries.

Nicholas Edwards quickly made his mark in the House with a maiden speech on the Health Service. His long concern on the subject bore fruit in the shape of the Withybush hospital in Haverfordwest. In 1982, as Secretary of State for Wales, he established the Pembrokeshire district health authority and I, in turn, as the new Member of Parliament for Pembroke, will be looking to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to bring that hospital's and that health authority's funding up to the figures that the Welsh Office says is necessary for them to operate at the right level.

Another powerful battle that Nick Edwards fought was over re-establishing an air base at Brawdy. It had been a naval base and had been closed down. He was able to re-establish it as an RAF base, which is how it now operates, together with a United States naval facility. We in Pembrokeshire look forward to that base continuing in operation for many years and playing a vital role in our national defence.

Nicholas was also greatly concerned to bring jobs to west Wales, and he recognised the need for a new road system. The considerable number of new roads in Pembrokeshire, including the Stepside bypass and the Fishguard road, are permanent legacies to his work.

Nick was also the Secretary of State for Wales for eight years—the longest serving Secretary of State that Wales has had. He had considerable vision, and I believe that he served Wales very well. I hope that my right hon. Friend who has succeeded him will be able to follow on with the good work that Nicholas did. I am sure that it will not be long before we see Nicholas Edwards in another place taking part in parliamentary debates again.

It is also traditional to refer to the beauties of one's constituency. That is more difficult for some Members than for others. In my case it is an extremely easy task. Pembrokeshire will be very well known to many hon. Members as an area of outstanding natural beauty. Over half the area is in a national park. I recommend hon. Members who have not had a chance to visit the county to make an early visit and to stay on holiday there to help our hotel industry.

Although not born in the county, it did not take me long to appreciate the "Pembrokeshire experience". It is a unique part of the United Kingdom. Popularly known as "Little England beyond Wales", it is an area where the people are very proud to live. To this day there is considerable resentment that Pembrokeshire was abolished as a county in 1974 by my right hon. Friend who is the new Secretary of State. I hope that he will recognise the error of his ways and allow Pembrokeshire to secede from Dyfed and once again become a proud county.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Take him there. Show him where it is.

Mr. Bennett: I intend to do that very quickly. I intend to take my right hon. Friend to Pembrokeshire shortly to see some of the problems that we have there.

The county is steeped in history. There are more than 20 castles in the constituency, and that is a reminder of the Norman settlements that there were in Pembrokeshire. Around Mathry in the north of the constituency one could believe that one was in France if one were to visit some of the villages there. There is a distinct air of Frenchness about some of the villages, even 900 years later.

In the south we have the holiday towns of Saundersfoot and Tenby. I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that from time to time I shall catch your eye to speak on matters of tourism, which provides a major source of jobs for my constituents. Along the coast is the historic town of Pembroke, and adjacent to that is the town of Pembroke Dock. As one crosses over the Cleddau bridge one comes to Milford Haven, and in recent years that has been the centre of the Welsh oil industry. With the recession in that industry there has been considerable unemployment in the town and in Pembroke Dock. It will not surprise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if from time to time I try to catch your eye so that I might speak on jobs and enterprise, because I am concerned at the high levels of unemployment that we still have in west Wales.

As I said to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), my right hon. Friend will be getting a very early invitation to visit the county. The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food visited the constituency on Tuesday to look at the fishing industry. I can tell Labour Members that we have had an increase in the trawler fleet in recent months and that we are very optimistic about a continuing increase in that industry.

There is a less glorious record in recent years in respect of the docks company in Milford Haven. I shall be watching with interest new plans that are to be announced tomorrow for the dock company in that area. Unless it is able very quickly to put its house in order, it may be necessary for the Government to intervene to make sure that that company is run properly. Haverfordwest is our county town and, with its market, is the centre of the farming industry in west Wales. Our main agricultural concerns are dairy farming, beef and the famous Pembrokeshire early potato. I am delighted that the first words that I was able to say in the House were in an intervention to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food yesterday about the family farms in Pembrokeshire, many of which have had tragic bankruptcies in the last few months.

In the north of the constituency we have the holiday town of Solva and the city of St. David's which I believe to be the prettiest as well as the smallest city in Britain.

The Queen's Speech is always an opportunity for new Members—and for old Members, too—to say a few words about the issues that they believe ought to be tackled by the Government. I am delighted tonight to be able to say a few words about what I see as the role and purpose of the Government and how we should judge Government policies. What should be our vision of society? I shall judge my right hon. Friends on their policies as to whether they give individual citizens more freedom or less freedom. The freedom of the individual and of choice is the cornerstone for the continuing regeneration of our nation.

I spent my early years in what is now popularly called the "inner city". I saw, as a pupil at a comprehensive school, and later as a teacher and as a councillor in inner London, the effects of 40 years of municipal Socialism—a society in which people were given no choice, not

even in the colour of the front door of their council house. Other effects were poor hospitals, poor public transport and a poor education system. No wonder that in the bus queues one used to hear people say: "Why don't they do something about it?" It never occurred to them that they might try to do something about it themselves. The local state did not give them the choice and, therefore, did not give them the responsibility. One cannot demand of people that they be responsible for what happens if one does not give them the choice in the first place.

As a schoolteacher in an inner London school in Bermondsey, I asked a parent why so few parents had turned up at a parents' evening. I was told: "We did not choose this school, did we?" That, at heart, is the crux of the problem that we face in the inner cities—giving back to our people in the inner cities the choice, the responsibility and the opportunity to grow, to own things and to look after their families without the continuing intervention and support of the state. Therefore, I shall judge Government policies on whether they help those people to be able to do that.

It is in those areas where there is substantial home ownership, share and pension ownership that one finds the lowest crime levels, the least vandalism and the greatest sense of real community and concern, because people have something that is theirs and that they can believe in, look after and protect. I want to see that extended to everybody who lives in the inner city.

In 1951 the Conservative slogan was "Set the people free". I believe very much in the innate common sense of our countrymen. I believe that we should continue to extend choice, to cut taxes and to get the Government's hands out of the pockets of the citizen. I support the measures in the Queen's Speech that give greater choice and freedom and that shift power to the consumer from the producer. I believe that the market system is the best way in which that can be done. Such a system is morally superior to Socialism and I look forward to playing a small part in the passing of those measures for the benefit of the nation and my constituents.

7.29 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): It is a great pleasure to congratulate the two maiden speakers who have just spoken. First, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) made a most passionate speech. I am glad that he broke the old tradition of being uncontroversial. Two things that he said will strike a responsive chord. The first was his point about the criminal waste of money on Trident when so many essential services are short of money. Millions of people in Britain would like the sort of choice about whether to pay for Trident or for the National Health Service. The second was my hon. Friend's point about the industrial conscription now introduced in the youth training scheme. I look forward to hearing my hon. Friend speak again.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) made a model of a maiden speech. He paid a warm tribute to his predecessor, whom everyone in the House knew, and took us on a tourist's view of his constituency, which I hope will be reprinted in *Hansard* tomorrow when we debate tourism; and, except for a note of controversy when he mentioned Disraeli and then decoded his own message, I should have thought that he could quickly have been promoted to the Government Front Bench. Perhaps the Disraeli reference could be concealed again. He got very

near to that at the end of his speech by referring to freedom, which reminded me of an old slogan that I heard in the 1945 election—

"F stands for freedom? What Britain brags about.

If you can't afford your dinner, you are free to go without." That is another view of his freedom which many Opposition Members would share.

I have found this the most political economics debate for many years, and I welcome it. We have begun to open up in the discussion, including in the speeches that we have just heard, some very real choices. For my part, I have long become utterly fed up with economics debates that were statistical, where people talked about efficiency, productivity and competitiveness or charged each other with being uncaring or incompetent.

I have never thought of the Prime Minister as being uncaring. She just does not care for the people whom I represent. I have never thought that she was incompetent. She is one of the most competent Prime Ministers, but competent in pursuing policies that I regard as destructive. Nor have I ever found much in the banana-skin theory of politics. I have read and re-read "Das Kapital" by Karl Marx and nowhere do I find a reference to banana skins as a factor in the decline of capitalism. When one gets down to the real questions that we have been discussing today, the House is at its best. I might add that I do not like extremist, hard Left, loony Left and so on.

Let us get down to what it is all about. Society is not about who is a better hand at dealing with the PSBR. I have no doubt that any hon. Member with an elementary capacity to cope with a calculator could try his hand at the PSBR, and we would all watch with anxiety. But it is not about that. What came out tonight was another stage towards realignment. Different opinions may be held on whether Devonport would join Bexley, Sidcup or Bexley, Sidcup would join Devonport. But there are more choices than have emerged from the speeches that we have heard. It is not just a matter of whether one is a monetarist or a supporter of Disraeli; whether one believes in caring and sharing and competence or in paternalism. *[Interruption.]* I hope that the House will listen to me as if I were a maiden speaker, because I shall be non-controversial, as is my wont. I want to put before the House another analysis which, although it may not find favour with Fleet street or the BBC, is a Socialist analysis of why we are in these difficulties.

My years of experience—I have been at it a long time—have convinced me, somewhat to my surprise, that neither the monetarists nor the wets, the carers nor the sharers, the more competent or the less competent are turning their minds to the real questions. If it is not a breach of some other rule of the House to mention serious matters, let me turn to that for a moment.

Every society ultimately reflects in its institutions and policies the basic principles upon which it is founded. Are we to be a jungle or a community? That is the basic question. When that has been settled, one can have any number of policies, White Papers, Green Papers, Neddies and Nickies, CBIs, or TUCs, but that is the basic question. Over the past few years, it has emerged that more people have come to see that. Are we about need or profit? Many things that are profitable are not needed and many things that are needed are not profitable. Until the House, in some economics debate, turns its mind to those questions, we shall not get far.

[Mr. Tony Benn]

I look back over history because there are cycles that go beyond tomorrow's headlines, the next by-election or Budget. There are cycles going over centuries. When I heard the Queen's Speech I was interested to find out where it came from. It came, as I might have guessed, from my predecessor, a previous Member of Parliament for Bristol — Edmund Burke. The Government would espouse every word of what he said in 1795. He said:

"Labour is a commodity like every other, and rises or falls according to the demand. This is in the nature of things . . . labour is . . . a commodity, and, as such, an article of trade. If I am right in this notion, then labour must be subject to all the laws and principles of trade, and not to regulations foreign to them . . . The impossibility of the subsistence of a man who carries his labour to a market is totally beside the question . . . The only question is, *What is it worth to the buyer?*"

Yesterday, when the *Today* newspaper was bought and sold and the journalists were bought and sold like chattels, it took us straight back to Edmund Burke. Until we address our minds to whether that is what we want, we shall never make progress.

Burke also said:

"To provide for us in our necessities is not in the power of government."

That is exactly what the Government say. Then he went on to say something else that the Government would be ill-advised to forget. He said that the rich

"are the pensioners of the poor, and are maintained by their superfluity. They are under an absolute, hereditary, and indefeasible dependence on those who labour and are miscalled the poor."

If anyone thinks that Karl Marx invented arguments about class, they had better go back to Edmund Burke. Adam Smith and Edmund Burke both understood the heart of the Socialist analysis, which is that there is a difference of interest between those who create the wealth and those who own it.

If I go back to Burke for one side, I must also go back to find the origins of the "loony Left" councils, so much beloved by all the media correspondents and the leader of the Liberal party. The reality is—I do not say it to persuade the Conservative party, because I do not suppose that I will—that early on, when Burke's analysis became understood, working people said that they would not wait for a good king to act for them, for a better Prime Minister, for a caring and sharing leader, but would band together and do it themselves.

The origin of the idea of a collective society is that those who could not, out of their own resources—the poor of whom Burke spoke, who could not afford—who can?—be sure that they could pay for their own home, their own children's education, their own health, however ill they might be, and their own pension, decided to band themselves together and buy those services collectively through the ballot box. It is not Socialist rhetoric that is a threat to the Conservative party, any more than archbishops making sermons about brotherhood have ever threatened society, because society goes on. It is the fact that people do band themselves politically to buy collectively what they cannot afford personally that is the threat to the Government Front Bench. That is the real argument, and the trade unions were a part of it.

Again, to find a non-controversial example of what that really meant, I went to Birmingham under the Liberals. Let me cite quickly the headings of what happened after

that lesson was learned—1838: the municipal charter institutes an elected council in Birmingham; 1842: establishment of police force; 1850: first city asylum at Winson Green opened; 1861: public library started; 1867: art gallery opened; 1870: school board started; 1872: first medical officer of health appointed; 1875: city takes over the supply of gas; 1875: corporation street clearance begins; 1875: city fire brigade started; 1876: city takes over water supply; 1890: first municipal houses; 1898: city takes over supply of electricity; and so on, until in 1939 the municipal airport opened and I served there myself in the Royal Air Force some years later.

Anybody who thinks that that can be reversed when each of those developments gave more, not less, choice to the people of Birmingham must think again. Every development of municipal Socialism—what they used to call "gas and water Socialism"—widened choice so that, for example, people did not have to live in a slum without proper medical care.

To present the functions of the community expressed through the ballot box as a threat to liberty is a lie which will not, in my opinion, survive experience. The Government are now trying to reverse all those gains. The result is a widening gap. I do not believe in the north versus south gap. I believe that north versus south is a new way of dividing people. The truth is that there is hideous poverty in London, unemployment in the inner cities and great prosperity in parts of the north. For some reason the Duke of Devonshire owns Derbyshire. I have not gone into the history of that. However, let no one tell me that there is not great poverty everywhere. The dukes in Scotland own a lot of land. It is a matter of those who own the wealth being against those who create the wealth.

I was amazed to read today that the Prince of Wales had gone to east London and was appalled at what he saw. Yet that is within a mile or two of where he lives. Should we not sack the BBC for not broadcasting programmes to tell people what conditions are like in this city? The last people to speak out on these questions, well ahead of the Prince of Wales, were councillors in Liverpool and Lambeth and they were disqualified for fighting to correct those very evils that now offend the sensibilities of the heir to the throne.

I do not want to sound like Enoch Powell, but if the Government proceed in this way, they face an explosive situation. That point has been hinted at and it must be stated clearly. We cannot dismantle collective housing, state education, state health, we cannot destroy trade unionism—which was, after all, the collective strength against the employer—and undermine democracy without, at a certain point, finding people like those in South Africa and other parts of the world who will die for the right to vote and for that vote to be effective.

I have put it in strong language because we are often told that we are the mother of Parliaments and that we are marvellous. We are told that everyone has copied us since 1295. We sometimes forget that the struggle for democracy was bitter and bloody in many parts of the world. Indeed, it was a bitter struggle in this country and I refer, in particular, to the struggle of the suffragettes that happened a year or two before I was born. Women did not want the vote for fun. They wanted it as a political route to economic power. If we try to take that away, there will be serious problems.

The argument is not about paternalism from the top. Although I am not trying to convince the House, perhaps

I may be allowed to allude to the Socialists' analysis of what happened after the first industrial revolution. Britain preserved its prosperity through huge imperialist expansion. We then began to decline, but returned to full employment during the last world war. There was a post-war boom which financed welfare capitalism. When we claim that consensus is over—as, of course, it is—it is the welfare capitalist option that is over.

I do not agree with the Prime Minister's analysis. She has taken the wrong course and is trying to return to Edmund Burke. However, we can never return to the policies so beloved of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) because that option is not open. As a serious body, this House must consider the choices open to it.

I do not want to enter into a statistical argument with the Chancellor because he has more civil servants at his disposal than I. However, I confess that I detect a worsening world economic situation. The oil revenue which it was my privilege to look forward to as Energy Minister when it came ashore has all gone on dole money and is now declining. Manufacturing industry has been allowed to decline when we should have used some of the oil money to rebuild it. Privatisation gains are running out and the world recession is widely forecast. The world debt crisis is around the corner and there is little doubt that international financiers now want back the money that the Chancellor gave in his pre-election boom before they will restore full confidence in him. When those factors are added to what is inherently weak in our economy, there will be growing divisions and bitter struggles.

We must be prepared to discuss some of those fundamental questions about right and wrong rather than profit and loss. It is wrong to let old people die of hypothermia and close pits where miners are prepared to dig the coal at lower cost to keep them alive. It is wrong to buy nuclear weapons from the United States and deny people the treatment that they need for AIDS or other illnesses which could be provided for within the Health Service. We should return to other ideas from the 19th century. The 19th century was a story of an expanding franchise. That is why I cross-examined the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), who referred to the link between payment and representation. That was a dangerous route for him to follow, although I know that he did not mean the full logic of his argument. What we need now is the extension of democratic control into economic and industrial areas which is the 20th century version of the expansion of the franchise in the 19th century.

We need the kind of self-management that would have at least given the journalists and printers on the *Today* newspaper the right to veto Murdoch's purchase of their paper. We hear so much about ballots, but there is never a ballot when an employer buys and sells employees like cattle at a market. Until we accept the idea of an industrial and economic franchise, there is no hope for tackling those problems.

We are not writing a Queen's Speech because there is not a Shadow Queen yet on the Opposition Benches. However, we must explain as best we can what is happening without personal abuse. We should support the people whom we were elected to represent. I believe that the proper answer to the poll tax is the common ownership of land—an old Liberal theory that goes back to the

peasants' revolt. I also believe in giving the unions the right to defend their members and the restoration of democracy. Far from being some strange, new, threatening creature in the Labour party, I am one member of a large body of people identifying with a philosophy of society that goes back beyond Burke and perhaps goes back to a certain passage in the Bible where Cain was asked by the Lord what he had done to Abel and he replied:

"Am I my brother's keeper?"

Until that principle somehow finds its way into society—until it finds a moral place—we will not make much progress.

The argument that I have put forward imperfectly is one in which I profoundly believe. I should like to feel that it will be seen as an argument meriting respect, even if only because so many millions of people believe that argument here and abroad and it is such an ancient part of our tradition.

7.47 pm

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has performed a service by setting out very clearly—possibly more clearly than he has ever done before—the differences between himself and the Labour party, the Socialists he represents and virtually the whole of the rest of the country. As he said, he holds those ancient views clearly. He took us through the 18th and 19th centuries, through Burke, Adam Smith and, above all, Marx. He took us through a view of society that is no longer valid. He should ask the million or so people who now own their own homes whether they believe in the principles of Marxism which the right hon. Gentleman so loves. He should ask the people who now enjoy the increased expenditure on the Health Service which has been generated by the economy that has been made strong by the free market principle whether they accept the Socialist view of society. The right hon. Gentleman has shown why we are clearly in a post-Socialist phase in Britain.

I want to share the praise that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield offered to my hon. Friends and Opposition Members who have contributed their maiden speeches in this debate. In particular I refer to the recent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). I entirely endorse the comments made by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield about the eloquence and efficiency of that speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke should not be nervous about showing his historical knowledge of Disraeli, whichever side of that particular debate the penny happens to fall. I endorse the tributes that were paid to our very good friend Nick Edwards. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) and join him in his comments about the splendid character who preceded him, Mr. Ian Campbell, whose puckish twinkle was much loved by so many of us.

The Gracious Speech continues optimistically with the great work that the Conservative party and the country have achieved in setting Britain free and successfully revitalising the British economy and society. In particular, we have brought back to the nation the sense of realism that it lost—the realistic understanding that the spending that we want, be it on the Health Service, education, research or social affairs generally, cannot be achieved until we create a healthy economy and that, in turn, a healthy economy depends on trade, commerce and

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

industry, which produce goods and services for which other people are prepared to pay. They may sound like obvious truths, but to a large degree, they were forgotten for too long and are still not comprehended by Opposition Members. That is the reality that the Government and the country have grasped, as the results of the general election showed.

There is one reality about national resources that the Government have not yet grasped, and it relates to the concern that we should have about the provision of health care. We suffer from a national failing in resolutely refusing to look at the enormous problem of funding health care. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) touched upon that matter, but, in fairly typical SDP-Liberal fashion, having tiptoed up to the problem, he failed to deal with it, and then tiptoed away.

The fog, myth, illusion and miasma that surround health care and the National Health Service, thick though they were and intensifying though they have been over 40 years, were thickened even more by the extraordinary campaign conducted by the Labour party during the three or four weeks of the general election campaign. Listening to the Leader of the Opposition speak no one would have believed that he was a member of a party—admittedly not a member of a Government; he does not have that experience—which ran the economy so badly that hospital building programmes were cut by one third, and in three years out of four, nurses suffered losses of pay in real terms. That is the record of the Labour party. The Labour party's contribution, as in many other matters, has been entirely negative. It has reinforced the lessons of the election campaign. It has also reinforced the point that one of the major weaknesses from which we suffer is that health care has become a political football. If we do nothing else during the next four or five years, we must ensure that that ceases. We must find a new system and a new organisation.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services on his appointment. We need a clear mind, together with intelligence and courage in tackling the problem. Certainly, throughout his political career, my right hon. Friend has demonstrated such qualities, and he will certainly need them in applying his capabilities to the issue. It is extremely difficult. I speak as someone who had a brief tenure in the DHSS. My right hon. Friend will not find it easy to obtain help from the insiders in the National Health Service. Too many of them have vested interests. Many who have the necessary knowledge have too many interests to protect and do not give Ministers or, indeed, the country the leadership and advice that they have a right to expect.

We continue with the myth that our National Health Service is the envy of the world. Sadly, it is a myth. If it were not a myth, our Health Service, or some of it, would have been copied by the rest of the world. It is copied by virtually no one because there are too many flaws in its structure.

It seems almost sacrilegious to say so, but it is time that we as a party recognised that fact. For example, Health Ministers may make the ultimate in political mistakes, in the sense that they have total responsibility in political terms. Whatever may happen in the hospital in Upper Puddlecombe is the responsibility of the Health Minister.

But Ministers do not have actual day-to-day power. It is vested in about 200 health authorities, and hundreds of hospitals, consultants or professions in the Service. I do not say that that is a recipe for disaster, but it is one for serious trouble.

The Health Service must confront an even more serious problem. Many have recognised it. Indeed, there is Powell's law. I join in the tributes that have been paid to the former right hon. Member for South Down. After many years of extraordinary and uniquely distinguished service to politics and the House, his disappearance from the House is much to be regretted. After his tenure as Minister for Health more than 20 years ago, Enoch Powell identified the sort of problems about which I am speaking. He said that demand for "free" medical care quickly outgrows any possible provision for it. Of course, that was true 25 years ago, and it is also true today.

Many people talk about resources. The fact is that, year by year, since it was created, the NHS has quite rightly absorbed ever more of our national wealth. For example, in 1955, it used about 3.5 per cent. of our gross national product. When the right hon. Member for Devonport was Minister for Health, it probably absorbed just under 5 per cent. of our gross national product. Now, under the Conservative Government, the figure is about 6.2 per cent. That is a huge increase. But the faster we pedal, the further we seem to fall behind.

Recently, the Institute of Health Services Management joined the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing to produce another document stating that we must keep spending on Health Services in line with the growth in national income, allowing for demographic change and special problems such as AIDS. The Institute of Health Services Management understands that since the Government have been in office we have achieved significantly more than that. When the Conservative Government came to office in 1979, 5.37 per cent. of our gross national product was spent on health. The figure is now about 6.2 per cent., so we have done significantly better. Of course, it is far from right. No one—least of all myself, having had the responsibilities that I enjoyed—would say that we are spending a lot. On that point, I certainly agree with the right hon. Gentleman.

The position will get worse. We have an aging problem. I do not deplore the fact. I rejoice in the fact that we are living longer. But if one goes, as I have, to dozens of hospitals, one will see that, in general ward after general ward—not geriatric wards—the average age of patients is about 70. One will find a few young men who have broken their legs on their motorbikes, but most patients are in their mid-70s or older, having their second hip replacements. That is splendid—it is an excellent development—but goodness me, it costs.

A further element in geometrically increasing costs is medical high technology, which may cost £1 million or whatever. Tomorrow, there will be something else. That cost is bound to increase at a geometric rate. The other factor that we cannot escape concerns the rising aspirations of our people. A slogan during the election campaign referred to a patient being treated where he likes, by whom he likes and all the rest of it. That is an impossible aspiration, as any serious person knows. People have genuine and new aspirations to health care. They may smoke 50 cigarettes and drink a bottle of whisky a day. If they are ill, it is wrong because someone has not paid

enough in National Health Insurance contributions to get them right again. That is a social, medical and political factor. That is the problem.

A great deal has been done. I agree with what the right hon. Gentleman said. The administrative costs in our Health Service are extraordinarily low by international standards. All those concerned with the National Health Service should be proud of that. By any international criterion, we compare extremely well. There is not a quick fix or a quick solution in improving administration. In a service that employs 1 million people, and treats many millions of patients every year, mistakes are made. Everyone will know of something that can be improved in a certain hospital, but basically, by international standards, our administrative levels are extremely fine.

The Government's record is also excellent. What we have done with the Griffiths reforms in improving general management has already had significant results, which will work through in future. What we have done in competitive tendering has had a significant impact and will continue. What we have done in the sale of real estate, using the NHS estate more effectively, has also had an impact.

Those are all extremely laudable measures, but we are talking about only £400 million or £500 million a year at the most in generating new resources for health care. If we look at international levels, which is where the right hon. Member for Devonport wanted to take us and which is a fair comparison, a different story is told. We spend about 6 per cent. of our gross national product. More is spent by our Government than any other western Government, but I am now talking about national spending. As a nation, we spend 6 per cent. As a nation, the United States spends nearly 11 per cent. of a much higher gross national product. The average for most western nations is about 9 per cent.

If we moved to the western average, which we should and which is the right of our people, that would represent an increase of about 3 per cent. of our gross national product, not 1 per cent., as the right hon. Member for Devonport said. That is about £10 billion. In other words, we are talking about a requirement to increase health spending by 50 per cent., not by a few hundred million here or there through sound administrative improvements. No Government could contemplate that.

Therefore, we must look for a new or changed system. This is not a new point, but it has not been accepted by the nation before. In 1967, the British Medical Association—it must have been of a different complexion from the BMA now—set up an inquiry under Dr. Ivor Jones, which lasted for two years. It reported in April 1970. It proposed a system that I would commend as well worth studying by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. A member of that committee was a rising young politician and barrister, who is currently the Foreign Secretary.

The committee suggested that important elements of health care—chronic care, invalid care and certain other things—should be taken out and dealt with nationally, and the rest should be dealt with on an insurance basis. That is one possibility. However, in terms of continuing to improve the health care of all our people, and ensuring the proper use of national resources, it is crucial that now, not in three years' time as we move into a pre-election period, the nation, the Government and the Conservative party face up to the dilemma that I have outlined. If we can achieve at least the recognition that there is a problem,

that would be my first ambition. My second ambition would be to find a solution to the problem. We are a very long way from it now, but I hope very much that my right hon. Friends in the Government will understand that that is a problem that we must now address.

8.5 pm

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): I felt a little diffident about speaking after the comment by the leader of the Social Democratic party, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), about people coming from local government, but then I composed myself, on the basis that as I have come from local government I might have more contemporary experience to bring to the House on some of the major issues that are being debated today and have been raised during the debates on the Loyal Address over the past five days.

I sincerely thank hon. Members on both sides of the House, and all the workers in the House—the people who serve us our food, the Whips' Office, Mr. Speaker's Office, and the Fees Office, which I must not forget—for the warm welcome that I have received and for the courteous and helpful way in which I have been treated. Every hon. Member has helped me in settling into an awesome place. It is an experience that one has to live through to fully appreciate it. I say that in all humility. I am grateful for the help that has been shown to me.

I come to the House following a legend—the legend of Bob Edwards, who was a fine parliamentarian, and who devoted all his life to the interests of the people. If I can serve the people of my constituency one quarter as well as he did, I shall be very pleased.

Bob Edwards made a wider contribution than that, from the days when he sat with Trotsky as a young man, and with Mao Tse Tung. He fought in the Spanish civil war. All that is known to the House. He is such a modest man. He served through the years with such humility. It is a great privilege to follow him. To have had him as a mentor over the past 20 years has been of great value to me.

Bob represented a black country constituency. Many of my constituents expected me to use words such as yow, bay or thear, and wanted me to talk in good black country dialect. However, I shall not do so, only because I have respect and regard for the *Hansard* writers. The dialect originated from the language of Chaucer, but I understand the difficulties of writing down all that I have been saying in black country dialect, so I shall stick to the Queen's English as we debate the Queen's Speech.

Bob represented the black country towns of Bilston, Coseley and Sedgley. I now represent, as he did before his retirement, the constituency of Wolverhampton, South-East, which still takes in a large part of the black country. I am a black country man and proud of it. I come here with the spirit of the black country with all that has happened to us over the past few years, some of which has been debated in the past few days.

Many of my black country men would not comprehend what has been said in the speeches over the past few days. I think that they would have difficulty in identifying some of the things that have been said by the Government about the community in which we live in the black country today. Unemployment is 25 per cent. in my constituency. In Wolverhampton, 25,000 good men and women do not

[Mr. Dennis Turner]

have the opportunity to make a useful contribution to society and cannot receive the rewards that would arise from that.

When we talk of unemployment, we must take into account the indignity that comes with it. Independence and freedom have been mentioned often in the past few days. The people whom I represent no longer have the freedom and independence given by the wage packet. A wage packet is important to them, and their dignity, standards and independence are based on that. So I must reconcile that freedom and independence with the difficulties and impoverishment in which many of our people have been placed by being out of work and finding it difficult to cope in present circumstances.

I wonder what I am supposed to say to the lady who came to see me and told me that she was existing on £39.50 a week. Although she received housing benefit, she had to pay for gas and electricity and keep herself on that amount of money. I reflect on that, and on the fact that there must be days in the week on which people, inside and outside the House, spend that much on one meal, yet that person and many thousands of others have to exist week by week on amounts such as that coming into their homes.

It is said that there is investment in housing, but in Wolverhampton we are starved of investment in housing. Year by year, since the Conservative Government came to power—my objective is not to make a political point—we have seen our capital programmes reduced to the extent that our ability to do what we want to in the inner areas has been taken away from us and we are not in a position to make a contribution.

Two thousand five hundred senior citizens and disabled people in Wolverhampton are seeking bungalows or purpose-built sheltered accommodation. We have not been in a position to build a bungalow for the past four or five years. We have estimated that it will take some of the people on that list who are 70 years old now until they are 120 to qualify for the bungalows or sheltered accommodation that they need, because of our lack of ability to provide it.

In Wolverhampton, 74 per cent. of the people are on housing benefit. Is that the freedom and independence that we are told about? What opportunities are afforded them to buy their own homes? Without any ideological hang-up, we—a Labour-controlled council—were selling houses in the 1960s and 1970s, and that is true of many authorities up and down the land. So the idea that tenants were somehow liberated purely by the advent of the Conservative Government is quite erroneous.

If we talk of health, 85 people have been turned away from our hospitals in the past three weeks—people who were seriously ill and could not be provided with a bed when they desperately needed one for emergency treatment. There has been a cut of £3.9 million in our district health authority funding since 1983—which is not the increase about which we have heard. Recently, because of pressures of finance, we have cut back by 50 per cent. on the incontinence pads that our elderly and disabled people need to be able to live in some kind of decency and comfort. That has happened in the past month.

Will the education that we hear about be education that is uplifting for all, or occasional schools that will be identified and can be moved into the private sector? In the

schools in Wolverhampton, there has been a reduction, year after year, in the capital programmes that are needed to improve those schools. There has been chaos in the legislation dealing with teachers, and we know that we cannot now give an education service to our children because of the turmoil that exists. Are we really intending to improve the lot of all our children in all our schools, or that of only a few? We shall see the test of that in the months ahead.

Across all these issues—and there are many more—the reality of people's lives in my community is different from what is portrayed in the speeches that we have had from Conservative Members. The Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) spoke a couple of days ago about the new licensing laws, but Omar Khayyam, that philosopher of old, would not have subscribed to his views on them:

"Ah love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!"

That is what we want in our community. We want fresh thinking and application from this House for the real needs of our people. If we do that, we will give people hope where it does not now exist. We can give people the opportunity to believe that they can grow and build.

In our lives, we have infinitesimal time to do what is necessary. Would it not be better now if, together, we were to start building something better, not only for some of the people, but for all of them? That would make a tremendous contribution to the people whom I represent.

8.17 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): As one new boy to another, I want to start by complimenting the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) on his excellent maiden speech, which was eloquent and passionately felt. It took me back, as well, because some years ago I worked for a year in one of the major factories in his constituency, and I recognised a lot of the problems from those times in what he said. He and I would differ on the solutions to those problems, but I recognise the honesty and eloquence of what he said.

It is with great humility that I rise to make my maiden speech, because Fulham has a tradition of sending to this House hon. Members who excel in their devotion to their constituency. The noble Lord Stewart, who represented Fulham for a great many years, was a man who was devoted to the constituency and a great servant of it, just as he continues to be a great servant of the country, as witness the views on defence that he expressed last year. He was followed by Martin Stevens, who spent more time looking after his constituency than, I suspect, did most hon. Members at that time. He was devoted to it and worked extremely hard for it and wore the title of Mr. Fulham with pride right until his untimely death last year. I can testify that he is well remembered and much loved in the constituency. I am sure that the House sorely misses his presence, too.

My predecessor, Nick Raynsford, was also a devoted constituency Member and, in the short time allotted to him, worked for the constituency in a way that was gratefully received by it.

I understand that it is right not to be controversial in a maiden speech, and I shall not be so, although, as my right hon. friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins)

said, that seems to be recognised more in the breach than in the observance these days. I do not want to be controversial, and hope that my remarks will not be taken as such. They certainly would not be taken as controversial if I made them in Fulham.

Fulham is an inner-city constituency and has many of the problems of inner-city constituencies. It is as well to remember that some inner-city constituencies, especially in London, are represented, not by Labour Members, but by Conservatives. Fulham is one of those. It has tasted Socialism and rejected it convincingly. Fulham has a long tradition of being a mixed area. All manner of people live there from those who are relatively well off to those who are not, and from those who have high levels of skill and training to those who have low levels. All types of people live in the same street and neighbourhood, and that is the great strength of Fulham. The strength of an inner-city area comes, not from its natural resources, but from the people who live there, and Fulham is no exception.

Fulham has a tremendous reputation for and tradition of small businesses which have existed there since it expanded westwards. It is often said that if one wants anything made or done the place to go is Fulham, particularly if one wants it done properly. We have small businesses to serve most of the needs which anybody could have. At present they are under serious threat, which is causing grave concern. Their ability to survive in Fulham is being threatened by the changes that are taking place in west London.

Many of the proposals in the Gracious Speech address the causes of that decline. As I have said, the great strength of an area such as Fulham is its people and the greatest strength of those people is their children and the education those children receive. For a long time educational standards have been declining and the attainment that children have achieved at school has not been at the level required for them to become the new employees of the businesses that already exist.

The Government's proposals on education provide a chance to remedy that. We have some excellent schools in Fulham which are greatly over-subscribed. They need the opportunity to expand and to get themselves out from under the dead hand of the ILEA. They need to be able to organise themselves, with parents and teachers participating, so that the best interests of the community and children are served. I am convinced that the proposals in the Gracious Speech will go a long way towards rectifying the problems in our local schools.

We have traditionally had a good youth training scheme in Fulham. Many children leave school without the skills they need to take on jobs and acquire training. One of our YTS workshops, run by Stan Marsh, is one of the best in London. He takes pre-school leavers and school leavers and trains them with the skills that they need to get jobs. He trains the children who have been failed by the education system to the extent that they leave school unable to read and write adequately. He teaches them to read and write and then finds them a job. A measure of his success is the number of children who leave his training and are placed in permanent jobs in the local community. Indeed, the need for the training that he provides is testified by the demand for his trainees in local businesses.

A major problem in Fulham—this is perhaps the most controversial element of my speech—has been the council, which has increased rates dramatically—by 49.6 per cent. this year. I am convinced that the proposals on

the community charge in the Gracious Speech will meet many of the problems caused by the rate rise. One reason why the council increased the rates so high was that less than half the people who vote in the borough pay either the full rates or any rates. It must be wrong that an elected body can raise rates and spend that money when less than half the people who vote pay for the services that it provides. There must be a better system whereby those who pay for the services vote for those who spend the money that is contributed. The community charge goes a long way towards doing that. It does not go the whole way and stop spendthrift councils, but it stops councils being elected by people who have no responsibility for paying for the increase in services that they want.

The damage of the rate rise is clear. We have seen jobs lost and damage done to the elderly and less well off. We need a reform of the rating system. I am convinced that the community charge will provide at least the framework for that necessary reform and produce a fair local basis for taxation. We all recognise that there are many problems with it as it stands. Many difficulties must be ironed out and questions answered about how it will apply in detail. However, the principle is incontestable; people should pay in one form or another for the services for which they vote. The community charge will achieve that. It is the solution to many of the problems in our inner-city areas.

That is not the only problem. Although we have had a rate rise, we may face another rate rise and the community charge may also be raised to levels which are equally damaging to the community. I urge my right hon. and hon. friends on the Treasury Bench not to lose sight of the fact that any reform of the rating system must go hand in hand with proper control of council spending. Too often, councils spend money in a way which is not in the interests of the local community, but which is furthering wider, national, political ends which the council was not necessarily elected to serve.

We need a reform of local government to ensure that it is much more accountable to the people who elect it. The community charge goes a long way towards doing that, but it must go hand in hand with a reform to achieve local democracy and control which will provide a basis for the local accountability of councils. I believe that the Government will introduce this major reform.

The proposals on housing in the Gracious Speech are important for inner-city constituencies such as Fulham. One of the major areas of dereliction in Fulham is the privately rented sector and I am sure that my predecessor spoke eloquently about that in the House. Fulham has a high level of privately rented accommodation and it needs to be revitalised. My predecessor and I would differ considerably about how that should be done. The proposal in the Gracious Speech to revitalise the private rented sector is the right way forward and will bring back into the housing stock about 8,000 empty homes in the borough. Those homes are currently being wasted, largely because it is impossible to rent homes in the private sector on a just basis as between landlord and tenant.

I strongly support the inner city proposals contained in the Gracious Speech. They are the solution to many of the problems that I see in Fulham and I commend them to the House.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I renew Mr. Speaker's appeal for brief contributions. Many hon.

[Sir Paul Dean]

Members still wish to speak, including two who wish to make their maiden speeches, before the winding-up speeches which are expected to begin at 10 minutes past 9.

8.31 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): My first duty is to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) and the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) on their maiden speeches. They were excellent speeches. They were lucid and eloquent and carried the controlled power of passion that is becoming one of the features of maiden speeches in this Parliament. They both have experience of inner cities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East spoke for his local council, which he supports, while the hon. Member for Fulham spoke against his council. They obviously have great affection for the areas that they represent, and it is quite right that they should have. Theirs were the authentic voices of local authorities, especially that of my hon. Friend. The Government will have to take that into account much more fully than they have done up to now.

Not only do my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Fulham love their towns, but they work in them and see anything that goes wrong while they are going to and from their work, or to and from home. We must remember the words of John Banham, who was the chairman and director, the head, of the Audit Commission. He said that local authorities were more efficient than central Governments. That is true, because they have the close immediacy to see problems. They feel deeply about those problems and seek ways to put them right.

Select Committees were mentioned by the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), and in that context I should like to make a personal plea to the Leader of the House. He should get the Public Accounts Committee set up as soon as possible, because there is a large backlog of work to be done. We are concerned about value for money, and that is the way to get it. If there are problems about the composition of Committees, the membership can subsequently be changed by a resolution of the House. I urge the Leader of the House to set the Committees up at the earliest possible date.

The Government have won three elections in a row. The question that we all have to ask ourselves is how this came about. I know that there are a number of subsidiary reasons, such as the state of the Labour party and the consumer boom. However, the main reason why the Government have been elected again and again is that they had the benefit of the oil from the North sea. That is what it is all about, and we should not fool ourselves.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer's predecessor had a balance of payments deficit of £8.8 billion, and this Government have had up to £7 billion surplus on the balance of payments. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is quite right to say that it is not revenue, but revenue does not matter that much. It can be raised by taxation, and although that is a bit awkward, it can be done. However, one cannot do much about the balance of payments.

Let us look at the problems that previous Chancellors have had. The 1945-50 Government were bedevilled with problems, and we had the retrenchment of Mr. Butler in 1955. The 1956 Suez adventure came to an end because of

a balance of payments problem. In 1964, Maudling's dash for growth came to an end because of balance of payments problems. It was a deficit of only £300 million, and we are talking about a turn around as a result of North-sea oil from a deficit of £8.8 billion to a surplus of £7 billion. That was a turn around of over £15 billion and suddenly, at a stroke, all the problems that bedevilled both Conservative and Labour Administrations for 40 years came to an end.

We must ask ourselves what we did with this astonishing stroke of fortune. We should not fool ourselves. The Government have not been so brilliantly led. It is not a case of a clever Government who did everything that was right that enabled the Conservatives to win election after election. It was this stroke of gigantic fortune. What did they do with this fortune? Did they carry out a fundamental reconstruction of our nation? Not at all; it went into consumption and overseas investment. Some people say that that is fine, that overseas investment will come back in due course with added interest. That is what people said in the years before the first world war and when we were sending vast sums of money to North America and to the rest of the world to expand industries and economies. That is when Germany, the United States and Japan were industrialising. We sent our money abroad, and manufacturing investment here declined.

How did we lose our lead in world manufacturing? We moved from being the supreme industrially based economy to an economy in which the rentiers and the City of London were accorded an over-dominant status that inflicted great damage on our nation. That was exemplified by the comments made by Sir Winston Churchill during his great days. Our supreme industrial economy, which had been admired by everyone from Disraeli downwards, bitterly declined.

Rarely in economic life or in any aspect of life is one accorded the chance of righting the wrongs inflicted by a previous generation. That chance came with devilish coincidence in the 1979 general election. The Conservatives could have done much then to right the wrongs, but what happened to the balance of payments benefit with which we could have changed so much? Our industrial competitors abroad have seen their industries advance, and although we had the oil surplus we were not as successful.

In a number of respects oil is no different from any other commodity. I know that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is not very happy about introducing any restraints on our exports of oil. He must understand that his enormous advantage lies in a high world price for oil. —[Interruption.] The Chancellor expresses his doubt. If Britain was a big wool producer like Australia, our interest would lie in a high world price for wool. If we were a coffee producer like Brazil, our interest would lie in a high world price for coffee. As I have said before, everybody knows that a potato farmer likes high prices for potatoes.

Why does the Chancellor not like a high price for oil? He can do something about oil prices. We know that we cannot be part of OPEC, but if we move in the direction in which our interests lie we could do something about it. If we were not so clever, we would be able to recognise our interests staring us in the face and rejoice in a high world price for oil. The advantage of a high world price is that some of the money could be used to finance some of the industrial expansion that I hope the Chancellor has in mind.

As the decline in North sea oil approaches, it will lead to greater need for our manufacturing industry. I regret that the capital allowances for investment are only 25 per cent. That is failing even to recompense those who have invested and who see the value of their assets depreciating. In many areas assets depreciate much faster than 25 per cent. Hon. Members will know that if one has a computer that cost £1,000, one could not sell it for £750. The selling price will be much less than that. If the allowance for depreciation is not accelerated, it should at least be in proportion to the actual rate of depreciation of the equipment.

We should have a tax incentive to invest, but we have a tax disincentive. The Chancellor of the Exchequer believes in tax incentives. He believes in performance-related pay, share options and reductions in income tax. He understands and accepts the need for incentives. Why should there not be incentives for manufacturing industry? If it is so important for us, we must get it to invest more, and more must be expected from manufacturing in the future than in the past, first because we need it more.

It is not a distortion of the economy to give tax incentives for that purpose, but it is such a distortion to undertake, as the Chancellor is now doing, to provide tax incentives that serve no economic or social purpose—and here I believe that I am carrying the Chancellor with me. When I speak of distortion of the economy, I refer, as the Chancellor will know, to tax relief on mortgage interest and on pensions for the self-employed. About £5 billion was thrown away on mortgage interest relief, but the Chancellor needs money for inner cities and for schools. The Government say so, and the Chancellor must provide some of that money.

Surely the Chancellor can now ask for something from the Prime Minister, although we know that she has been against this. The Chancellor will not remain in his post for ever. His management of the economy, although I differ from him, won the election—there is no question about that. It was very well organised, and I pay tribute to the technical skill that brought about circumstances in which, over a long period, an election could have been called at any time without any particular economic problems. The Chancellor prepared the ground to enable the Prime Minister to call the election. No Chancellor of the Exchequer could do more for his Prime Minister.

Jock Bruce-Gardyne has commented that the right hon. Gentleman is not a great reforming Chancellor, but I think that he still has a chance to redeem himself. He wishes to be a reforming Chancellor—I detected that in many of his comments. If he does not want that, for what does he want to be remembered? Does he want to be remembered as one who embraced monetary nonsense, formulated it, implemented it and finally obliterated it? Does he want to be remembered as one who, to win one election, kept the show on the road—although I do not belittle that? Surely, if there is a time when the Chancellor can ask the Prime Minister for something, it is now. He should not ask for honours, but for something that will mark his record as a tax reformer, and that is how he would dearly wish to be remembered.

Surely the Chancellor has the right to ask for a reduction in taxes that distort the economy to no benefit. The particular problem about mortgage interest relief is that houses are too often regarded as investments rather than as homes. There is the enormous advantage of not having to pay schedule A tax or, in many cases, capital

gains tax. Mortgage interest relief represents an enormous amount, and the poll tax will be a further addition to the incentive to treat a home as an investment. We know that the poll tax is nonsense, in this as in many other respects. Nearly every country has some form of property tax. Property is eminently taxable, and to remove it from that area of taxation cannot be very sensible. The Chancellor prides himself, with justification, on the improvements in inflation under his administration, but he must remember that inflation also applies to houses, although house inflation does not appear in the retail prices index.

Self-employed pension funds are not taxed on their income. That is such an extreme amount of assistance that clearly there is money there. If the Chancellor is serious—I believe that he is; the Government have said so, and the Prime Minister has made herself chairman of some important committees—about spending money, and if there is to be fundamental change, there must be some movement of money. It cannot just be diverted from one area to another. The Chancellor must know that, and if he does not, the Chief Secretary does. If the Chancellor is serious, and if he is to find the money that is needed for cities and for schools, he must at least start to end some of those abuses pretty quickly.

8.44 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): It is a privilege to follow in debate the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who had a distinguished career at the Treasury. However, I must say that I misunderstood a good deal of what he said. First, he appeared to claim that the misfortunes of Socialist policy were entirely a matter of chance, and that the good fortunes of our economic policy were entirely a matter of good fortune. He then said of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor that it was his manipulation of good fortune that enabled us to deceive the electorate into wisely rejecting the policies of what he calls "distortion".

If the plea of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) were answered, and we once again had a unified defence policy, I cannot imagine any other plank off which the Labour party could walk out into the deep ocean of sharks than to say that mortgage tax relief is a wicked distortion and should be abolished.

What has happened in this country is simple. It is the distortion of Socialism, the distortion of cellophane, the distortion of the English roses that Labour party members all had to wear—a fresh one every day. I was delighted that Buster Edwards, the train robber, had the intelligence to say, "I wish that my little flower cart was outside the Labour party headquarters."

I want to discuss a concept which I believe is important, and which underlines the Gracious Speech. It may be lost on some hon. Members that the Sovereign wears the badge of the most ancient order of England, while her consort wears the badge of the most ancient order of Scotland, the thistle. It is 500 years old, and that is being celebrated in Scotland tonight. We were made one nation not, I regret to say, by the kindness of the Scots to one another, but by their indiscipline, which in 1745—I say this as a Jacobite Episcopalian—enabled General Wade, followed by the romance of Sir Walter Scott, to unite the nation. We are a united nation in Great Britain, but we are different in all the little parts of Scotland, of England, of Ireland and of Wales. It is false and wrong to say that any political party should try to claim that we are divided into nesting

[Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn]

boxes. Socialism now says that it has triumphed in the smallest one left, and can eventually rule by a tax-raising assembly.

The shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscaden (Mr. Dewar), said that Scotland was a country crying out for change. But change to what? Are we asking to change to a nation that is more taxed than the rest of Britain? Let us take the difference between Gretna Green and Cumbria. For every £127 that the man in Gretna Green gets, the person over the border receives £80.

Are we prepared to change from a nation with one eleventh of the population of Great Britain which gets a third of the regional grant? Are we prepared to change from a nation in which the Locate in Scotland bureau has identified that 80 per cent. of inward investment from northern America into Europe wishes to come, provided that there is no change in our economic policies, and provided that we do not have some separatist fantasy tax-raising assembly?

The figures for Scotland show that the same number of people voted for the Conservatives as voted in the previous election. There was a loss of only 348 votes per constituency. There was tactical voting.

The concept was put forward that Scotland is deprived. The term "north-south divide" was previously applied to the Watford gap and above it. The media have now moved it to Hadrian's wall. I have the good fortune to live above the north-south divide. Yesterday I spent a great deal of my time in Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Rutland. If any Scot imagines that that is a preferable way of life, he cannot comprehend Scotland's good fortune. Scotland has the majority of the new industries. The industrial revolution gave us coal and steel and the Irish potato famine gave us cheap labour. Then we suffered the misfortune of Socialism, which kept out-of-date industries in being long after they had become irrelevant.

Scotland is not in favour of Socialism. It is against the despair of Socialism. To what did Socialism appeal in this election, if it appealed to anything? It appealed to despair. Socialism even got hold of a little boy who needed a heart operation and said, "Isn't it awful?" [Interruption.] Yes, he has had his operation now, but how did he get it? He got it privately. He jumped the queue—just what the Leader of the Opposition accused my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister of doing. All Socialism is hypocrisy. It is an appeal to despair.

Socialists in Scotland cannot claim that the Conservatives do not have a mandate to govern. If we want to create another Irish problem, all that we need to do is to repeat it on the mainland. One can imagine the trauma and the anxiety and the divisions between Glasgow, Edinburgh, the Highlands and the Lowlands and the middle parts of Scotland. Let not those who have lived in Scotland for only a few generations preach to those who have lived there for much longer.

A Labour Scottish assembly would be determined to support every extravagant form of industrial dinosaur. The people of Great Britain voted in this Government by a huge majority. Socialists cannot explain that away, unless they object to democracy. The people of this country want prosperity, dignity, decent houses, decent

schools and good hospitals. A Scottish assembly would divide the nation and cause the very conflicts that we cannot solve in Ireland.

I have more in common with most of those Opposition Members who are English than I have with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton).

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): That is the best compliment the hon. and learned Gentleman has ever paid me.

Mr. Fairbairn: Let us never forget that we are one nation. Of all parts of the kingdom, Scotland is probably the most cosmopolitan. It objects to the fact that the Prime Minister is from the south of England. It never objected to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), or to Mr. Callaghan, or to Lord Wilson of Rievaulx on the basis that they were English. It objects to the fact that the Prime Minister is English because she did something of which people are either jealous or proud. I am thankful that the huge majority of people, and an increased number of people in my constituency, appreciate the excellence of the economic opportunities that she has provided for them.

I do not wish to hear that, having lost England, Socialists are now retreating to Scotland and that if they lose Scotland they will retreat to Glasgow, or elsewhere. Between Eyemouth and the Mull of Galloway there are 24,000 Socialist votes and between the Black Isle and Mull there are 34,000 Socialist votes.

Mr. Maxton: How many Tory votes are there in Glasgow?

Mr. Fairbairn: There are very many Tory votes in Glasgow. Socialism seeks to disfranchise the Scottish people and to hold them in its own horrible grip.

8.57 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): It is salutary for a new Member to have to respond in a non-controversial manner. I feel rather like the hors d'oeuvre when the diners are queueing for the main course.

I take great personal pleasure in paying tribute to my predecessor, James Callaghan. It is difficult to find anything new to say about a man who held three great offices of state and whose last role, in a parliamentary career that spanned more than 42 years, was to serve with distinction as the Father of the House. He will be remembered by my constituents as a superb constituency Member of Parliament. He never allowed the burden of high office to interfere with the task of representing individuals. He never failed to listen to the most mundane of problems, to attend party meetings each month and to seek to improve the quality of life of his constituents.

I have seen the respect in which Jim was held by so many ordinary people, spanning three generations, as I have worked and campaigned with him over recent years. I can only commend the help and encouragement that he has given me in preparing to take his place in this House as a model of continuity. If I fail to live up to his high standards of service to the constituency, it will not be for lack of his example or support.

The recent months have been marred by the illness of Lady Callaghan, and I know that many of my constituents will want me to pay tribute to her 42 years of service to the constituency and to express the hope that she will continue to make speedy progress towards full recovery.

During the debate on the Gracious Speech right hon. and hon. Members have referred to the conventions of this House to be observed by hon. Members making maiden speeches. To prove that perceptions change little over the years, I refer to the first words of the then James Callaghan as the new Member for what was then Cardiff, South. He said that listening during the first few days it seemed to him that a new tradition was growing up. He said:

"you get up and ask for indulgence, and then proceed to lay about you with all you have got, tormenting everybody on the other side, and hoping to get away with it. I hope I shall not trespass too deeply on the indulgence of Members on the other side of the House". — [*Official Report*, 20 August 1945; Vol. 413, c. 351.]

His next word was "but".

In following another tradition of the House, that of referring to my constituency, I express a similar hope before coming to my "buts". During the past 15 years I have served parts of my constituency as a city councillor and worked with its young people in the community in other localities in my daily work. My constituency is a series of individual communities, each with its own distinctive character, following the coast of Cardiff and clustering around the docks area of the city. Those communities range from the older working class areas of the city with their sense of community and pride to the newest areas of private house building. My constituency includes the most cosmopolitan parts of the docks area of Cardiff and the seaside town of Penarth, with its reputation for prosperity as well as its rich variety of small communities. My constituency includes pre-war and new council estates and older private housing in desperate need of renovation. In short, it is a microcosm from which the Government could learn many lessons.

My constituency also includes the Cardiff docklands area which offers such tremendous opportunities for the future which in turn offer a challenge to the Government to demonstrate a trait that has been absent from a great deal of the rhetoric that I have heard in the past few days — the ability to co-operate.

Having listened with interest to the wise advice of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) in echoing the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) and in support of the contentions made earlier by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), may I offer Cardiff as an example of the value of co-operation? The city is beautiful and warm-hearted — characteristics that can take the unsuspecting visitor by surprise. It is also a thriving city because of the success of redevelopment in the centre over the past 15 years.

That success has not been achieved overnight, nor has it been achieved by the course of calculated neglect known as "leaving everything to market forces". It came as a result of careful planning. It followed from public investment by responsible local councillors. It is based on a partnership between public enterprise and private enterprise in which commercial interest was balanced carefully by public interest and the interests of the citizens of Cardiff came first.

As someone who in recent years has been a properly accountable local representative, I am proud to have played a small part in that process and to be able to point to continuity over the years, despite the switches of political control within the local authorities from election to election. The model that I offer is enterprising local government, well rooted in its community, maintaining

creative tension between commercial and community interests and co-operating with central Government initiatives. There are plenty of other examples. The way in which tourism has developed is based on similar public enterprise, with the city council taking the lead and then working in partnership with the private sector.

As the gateway to south Wales, Cardiff is important to the whole region and local authorities in neighbouring areas have taken similar initiatives in trying to restore the prosperity of their own economies. We have one of Britain's most successful enterprise agencies, established following initiatives by Labour councillors and based on firm foundations of close co-operation between local authorities, local businessmen and agencies of national Government.

It is difficult for one who comes from that background to comprehend the comments about local government made by Conservative Members, except as an expression of bigotry founded on political ideology rather than experience, and fuelled by the type of journalism that knows little and cares less about local communities and their future.

If Cardiff's recent history offers such positive lessons about co-operation — and it does — let me come to my two "buts". The redevelopment of Cardiff docklands has started with public investment by a Labour county council and a positive initiative from a Conservative Secretary of State. The development board recently established has started to benefit from the positive co-operation of the local authorities and, indeed, from the wider community — residents, business people, the enterprise agency, and so on.

The establishment of the board included reserve powers to ride roughshod over local interests. Let me state categorically that if those reserve powers have to be exercised, the board, its chairman and its members of staff will have failed in their duty.

The existence of such powers may be thought of as an incentive to co-operation, although Cardiff has demonstrated that it does not need that sort of outside stimulus. It has demonstrated its ability to resolve conflicts of interest from within rather than without. But the exercise of such powers would be a different matter.

I earnestly hope that the new board will live up to its early expressions of intent, and I also hope that the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), the Secretary of State for Wales, will in turn demonstrate the commitment to creating a "spirit of partnership" with local government, employers and the trade unions that he expressed in his speech to the Association of District Councils in Cardiff last week. If he and the board understand clearly that they must work at co-operation with the other parties — and not just demand co-operation by the other parties — we will have a foundation on which to build.

My second "but" relates to the face of Cardiff. I could give many examples, but on this occasion I choose only two. The first is unemployment. Despite all the success of our initiatives locally to bring jobs to Cardiff, despite the effectiveness of local government initiatives, and despite all the growth helped by the Cardiff and Vale enterprise, we see devastating unemployment laying waste our communities. The majorities by which new Members arrived in this House from south Wales demonstrate that people know where the blame lies and who will look after their interests.

[Mr. Alun Michael]

Government unemployment statistics are so open to doubt that I turn to a more dependable source — how people described themselves in the local census last year. To put it bluntly, a person may not know whether or not he is a Government statistic, but if someone asks, "Are you unemployed?" that person sure as eggs knows the answer. In the Butetown estate — that cosmopolitan community which forms a residential island in a commercial sea and which borders right on to the docklands development — male unemployment has reached more than 50 per cent. On the Tremorfa estate, another well-established community on the borders of the docklands development area, the unemployment rate has gone up from 20 per cent. in 1981 to 34 per cent. in 1987. Unless these communities share in the prosperity that is coming to the city, we shall be building trouble, division, strife and despair for the future.

My second example is housing. After 14 years of representing local people, I resent the theorising and posturing on housing from the Government Benches. Conservative Members should visit Labour ward surgeries and they will learn the realities of families in desperately cramped conditions, of old people desperate for a little place near the shops and their children and of young couples being pushed to separation by the strain of living with in-laws. The Chancellor's speech today offered little choice of freedom for them and less hope of ownership than a trip to the moon.

Those are the realities behind the lengthening waiting lists and record homelessness. We do not want to neglect people in real need, and we do not want to level down our communities. We want these people to share in the minimum facilities of a decent home with a chance of a secure, peaceful and creative life. The ability and will to achieve this exists locally. We need matching determination from central Government, and that is what I seek on behalf of my constituents. That is why I extend a plea to the Secretary of State for Wales to give local government in Wales the money and the freedom to get on with the job that it can do so well — that of building homes and communities as well as offering co-operation in the task of economic recovery.

To the right hon. Gentleman I say, "Given the opportunity, ignore the extremists on your own Benches and concentrate instead on what has worked in the past and which can work for the future." That requires a positive spirit of co-operation to tackle the real problem of our people, which is the proper use of national resources by investing in the future.

9.8 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I begin with two agreeable duties. The first is to congratulate the exceptionally large number of new hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches during the Queen's Speech debate. Today, a further seven have taken the plunge, and all have come to the surface in very good order. All have made excellent contributions and have paid tribute — which the House welcomes — to their predecessors, often in the most generous terms.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) gave us a vivid picture of his constituency. He eloquently described it as a workless community. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton

(Mr. McFall) used a memorable phrase when he described the Government's policy as, "the bludgeoning of collective provision" and referred to what is becoming an all-too common feature in our cities, "public squalor."

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) spoke eloquently and in the Queen's English, to use his phrase, about the needs of ordinary people in his constituency and, above all, the great privations that inadequate housing and investment are inflicting on them. It was good to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) that Cardiff is a city where there has been successful urban renewal. In many ways it offers a good model for the sort of partnership and co-operation that is essential between the public and private sectors if we are to succeed.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) made an interesting speech and I had a feeling that he was in love with his constituency. He described it most graphically and almost invited the rest of us to go down there and visit him. The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), who rather disarmingly told us that he would follow the tradition of making a non-political maiden speech, defended the Government's most controversial policies with great vigour. I know that his intentions were entirely as he stated them. The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) made an interesting speech and highlighted an interesting change in the composition of the Conservative party. For the hon. Member to have been educated at the Harrow college of technology rather than Harrow school is an interesting insight into the processes of change that are affecting even the Conservative party.

I welcome the Leader of the House and wish him well in his new duties. It is a great and traumatic change from being head of the Trappist order in the Whips Office to the demands for instant articulation, which is the lot of the Leader of the House. His task is not made any easier because the right hon. Gentleman must follow in the steps of the former Leader who, by general agreement, was an outstanding Leader in this House. It was not only the wit of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) but his independence of mind that won him the respect and affection of the House.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): It also lost him his job.

Mr. Shore: It was almost certainly those qualities, particularly the latter, that lost him his job.

The Leader of the House has a difficult path to pursue. It will help the right hon. Gentleman if he remembers throughout his period of office, as I am sure he will, that he is not only a senior Minister of the Government but that he holds a special position in relation to the House. He must uphold its traditions, ensure that the Government's majority is not used oppressively and that the rights of the Opposition, the smaller parties and Back Benchers are respected.

I have a word of warning for the Prime Minister. She has won a famous victory, but she would do well to remember two points. First, she owes her great majority in this House not to massive, let alone growing, support for her policies in the country, but to the grievous and continuing divisions that are being created in the anti-Tory vote. No Conservative Prime Minister since the war has won a general election with so low a share of the popular

vote 43 per cent. as that that was obtained by the right hon. Lady in all three of her general election victories.

The great service and assistance that has been afforded to the Conservative party by those who deserted the Labour cause some six years ago will not continue. The results of the election on 11 June and the subsequent break-up of the alliance, before our eyes, have ended all pretence that the alliance was or could be a credible alternative. That event will radically change the prospects for and the outcome of the next election.

The Prime Minister might also remember that it was Lord Liverpool who last won three elections in a row. History has not been kind to him. He presided over one of the most oppressive and repressive regimes in British history. He faced massive unrest and unemployment in Britain. He met that by suspending habeas corpus and by imposing the infamous six Acts of 1819. His political obituary is worth recalling. Lord Liverpool was destitute of wide sympathies and of true political insight. His resignation of office was followed almost immediately by the complete and permanent reversal of his domestic policy. This is the fate that I believe awaits the right hon. Lady and her Government.

I gave one more preliminary point to make. I hope that this will be the last Queen's Speech recorded only by sound radio. It is more than time, as my right hon. Friend the leader of the Labour party said this afternoon, that the House of Commons emulated the established practice of the other place and agreed to allow in the television cameras.

In the last Parliament, we came very near to making the change. Only a last-minute change of mind, or a failure of nerve, by the Prime Minister, led to its rejection. I can well understand the Prime Minister's reluctance to be exposed at least twice a week to the nation's gaze. However, I hope that the wider interests of political democracy will prevail. The issue should be put to the House on a free vote at an early date.

I turn to the use—or misuse—of national resources and the failure to concentrate them on the areas of greatest need and potential economic growth. The Chancellor of the Exchequer made a typically complacent and self-congratulatory speech but uttered not a word about unemployment or our manufacturing industry. Yet the neglect of manufacturing industry still poses the greatest threat to our mid-term economic prosperity. It is not just a question of the effects of unemployment, appalling though those are, but of the ever-growing threat to our balance of payments as foreign manufactures continue to flood in.

In the last Parliament, our historic surplus in manufacturing trade disappeared. In 1985 our visible balance was in deficit to the tune of £3,000 million. In 1986, that deficit had grown to £5,400 million. The trend is all too clear. If it continues in this Parliament, as it did in the last two, we shall face the 1990s, as our oil exports decline, with an ever-widening balance of payments deficit.

Three factors are especially worrying. First, our trade imbalance is not confined to the older manufacturing industries. It is especially marked in the new industries, including the whole range of information technology. Secondly, today we are investing less than we were eight years ago. As the NEDC office pointed out in its paper reported in the newspapers today, we have not the capacity now to sustain even a modest 3.5 per cent. per annum

growth in industrial output. If we cannot achieve that in manufacturing industry, we shall never catch up in the 1990s with the level of manufacturing output that the Government inherited in 1979.

Thirdly, in research and development, we are outstripped by our major competitors and, at the more fundamental research level, we are not carrying out the basic research in physics and engineering that we need. Two days ago the Royal Society published its report on the migration of scientists and engineers from the United Kingdom. *The Times* summed up its main features as follows:

"Almost a quarter of the total fellowship of the Royal Society, widely regarded as the cream of British science, is now permanently living abroad. The report also draws attention to an internal brain drain in which talented science graduates are being tempted away from research into lucrative positions in commerce and the City."

Professor Sir George Porter, the Nobel Prize winning president of the Royal Society, said yesterday:

"I cannot stress enough how serious the situation is. So many of our best people are going overseas."

Mr. Whitney: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House, if the country had inflicted on it the taxation policies of the right hon. Gentleman's party, what effect that would have on the brain drain?

Mr. Shore: There is no convincing evidence that the movement of people of this type from Britain to overseas universities and research institutes is governed by the levels of taxation in the United Kingdom. *[Interruption.]* I suggest that sceptical Conservative Members read the report because there the principal causes are enumerated as a result of the survey of the Royal Society's membership. By far the greatest factor is the lack of facilities and career opportunities. Those are the points that the society stressed, and I believe those to be true.

The Government's response is characteristically perverse. For years they have been cutting grants to research councils and to universities, with a minor relief announced just before the recent general election. Only yesterday the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the downgrading of NEDC, both in terms of its staff and the frequency of its meetings.

I turn now to the second of the major threats, as I see it, that we face, and that is the slowdown in economic growth among the industrialised countries. The OECD's latest projections are for a 2.5 per cent. growth in 1987, and the same figure for 1988. This is well below the productive potential of the OECD countries. Therefore, we shall see a corresponding rise in unemployment. Just as bad, the slowdown in economic growth in the industrial countries will lead to a fall-off in demand for the raw materials and other products of the developing world. How, in those conditions—and the point was made very well by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—the debt-laden Third world countries can continue to service their debts out of export earnings no one is able to see.

The dangers of major default, with all the implications that that would have for the western banking system, are greater now than they have been for the past five years. That is not just my judgment, but the judgment of people best qualified to give such an opinion. Those were the main items on the agenda at the summit of the Seven at Venice on 9 and 10 June. They deserved from the British

[Mr. Shore]

Government much more than an election photo call visit by the Prime Minister and much more urgency than the Chancellor of the Exchequer showed in his speech today.

I turn now to the use of our resources to help, as our amendment puts it, the "areas of greatest need". The Prime Minister announced on the morrow of polling day that it was the inner cities that were now to be the main focus of Government policy. Heaven knows, they need to be. Ten years ago the last Labour Government made their priority the launching of a new inner-city policy involving the creation of the so-called partnership and programme authorities. Those areas were identified from objective indices of social and economic need. Those were the areas where cumulative disadvantage in terms of high unemployment, bad housing, environmental decay, population imbalances, single-parent families, unskilled labour, low education attainment and concentrations of New Commonwealth immigrants were to be found.

In the partnership areas, we identified the rotting cores of our great conurbations — inner Liverpool, inner Manchester Salford, inner Birmingham, inner Newcastle, Gateshead, and inner London — Lambeth, Islington, Hackney and the five dockland boroughs.

The Government have not disputed our judgment about those priority areas. Each of the conurbation areas has been accepted by them as an area of special need, and so have all the programme authorities as well. Because those were the areas of the greatest need, the Labour Government's policy was based upon targeting Government resources to assist them. Greater needs inevitably involve greater expenditure.

During the past eight years the Prime Minister has taken exactly the opposite view. Higher expenditure has been taken, not as evidence of need, but as evidence of gross extravagance and incompetence. They have been fined, abused and pilloried as a consequence. It is an astonishing fact that it is exactly those areas of greatest need — that point is not in dispute — that have had the most harsh reductions in rate support grant, with no fewer than 11 of those 14 local authorities rate-capped to make sure that they cannot meet the needs of their own people. It is here, too, in those 14 local authority partnership areas, that the Government have imposed the most catastrophic cuts in housing investment programmes. Let me illustrate what that means.

In the seven partnership areas to which I have referred, 14,000 new local authority homes were built on average in each year from 1975 to 1980. In the last five years, from 1982 to 1986, no more than 4,000 new homes were completed on average each year. Thus, in the last five years alone, these inner city areas have lost some 50,000 new homes which could have been provided if the Labour Government's rate of completions had been sustained. Is there any surprise that there should be a housing crisis in our inner cities today, and can there be any reasonable doubt about why the number of homeless people has doubled in the past eight years? It is no good the Government saying that the private sector completions have made good the loss; they have not.

Yesterday, the Prince of Wales visited my borough of Tower Hamlets and he was appalled by what he saw. In his words, the people of the area

"are working and living in conditions almost as bad as those on the Indian Sub-continent. It really is not acceptable."

In Tower Hamlets alone, not a single new local authority home for rent has been completed in the past two years. Over 1,000 families are living in bed and breakfast accommodation and more than 10,000 urgent cases are on the housing waiting list.

There is something indecent, as well as unacceptable, in the fact that in that same borough, where some of the worst housing conditions in Britain prevail, homes in its dockland area, with a starting price of over £90,000, are freely available. Freely for whom? Not for my constituents, but for people who have the wealth and the savings that enable them to buy those new dockland houses. That, apparently, is what the Prime Minister means by freedom of choice. It is a bogus, spurious freedom of choice. So much for the past eight years.

What new initiatives are the Government now proposing for the inner cities? As the Prime Minister put it in a television interview on 12 June,

"the whole of the point about the housing and education was to bring increasing prosperity to some of those very people in inner cities who feel they are trapped and that is why I want to bring it forward as fast as possible."

Does the right hon. Lady really think that permitting tenants on council estates to choose a different landlord will in itself lead to improvement in the conditions they face? Of course not. She must have in mind precisely the provision of extra funds for improvement and modernisation of those old estates — the very funds which she has denied the local councils through her cuts in housing investment programmes.

Again, does the Prime Minister really believe that by allowing the most favoured schools to opt out of the local education authorities she will be doing anything to improve the conditions of the great majority of schools in the local authority areas? Does the Prime Minister think that by allowing individual London boroughs to opt out she will do anything other than wreck the ILEA? If Wandsworth, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster and the City pull out of the ILEA as they have clearly said that they will, they will take 21 per cent. of the school population with them and more than 60 per cent. of ILEA's funds.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No, I will not give way.

Does the Prime Minister intend to restore money with increased grant aid to ILEA, or will she leave the rump authority with the impossible task of providing decent education for the most deprived boroughs in inner London?

Then we have the poll tax. The Prime Minister must be aware, as a result of exemplifications published by the Department of the Environment, that by fixing a standard business rate and confining local authority taxation to a nearly universal poll tax on adult citizens, the principal losers will once again be the most deprived inner city areas.

The awful truth that I believe that the debate on the Queen's Speech has gradually revealed about the Prime Minister's new initiatives in the inner city, is that they are not designed to assist. They are designed only to create small enclaves of prosperity and educational escape routes for small minorities while leaving the main areas of our inner cities to face increasing deprivation, vastly reduced community services, gross overcrowding, Dickensian slums, growing violence, vandalism, racial tension and increasing alienation and despair.

That is the nightmare emerging in that large part of Britain which so few Conservative Members are now able to represent. That is part of the divisiveness of the past eight years of Conservative Government. It will become even worse in future unless the House can, in the process of debate and discussion, and with the help of people outside the House, bring about some change of mind in the Government. That is what we will certainly seek to do. Tonight we will vote for our amendment to the Loyal Address.

9.32 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I thank the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) for his kind words at the beginning of his speech. We have had an excellent debate. We have heard some excellent maiden speeches today, and they bring the total over the six days of this debate to 38. That compares with the 31 maiden speeches in the debate on the Loyal Address in 1983. I am sure that Laurie Pavitt would be pleased to know how many new Members have taken the advice that he gave to the new hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) to "get it over with".

We have heard maiden speeches from the Opposition Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). All those hon. Members made excellent speeches. We heard maiden speeches from the Conservative Benches from my hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) and for Fulham (Mr. Carrington). I am happy to join the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney in congratulating all those Members who made maiden speeches today. I look forward to hearing all the maiden speakers taking part in our debates.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North was anxious to take up a specific constituency point with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I have been in touch with my right hon. Friend and he will consider the hon. Gentleman's comments carefully and write to him. I am sure that all hon. Members who have spoken today made effective speeches. I recall my maiden speech 13 years ago. Afterwards, I was congratulated by Mr. Jeffrey Archer, who was then an hon. Member. He said to me, "At least it will read well." I say to all those hon. Members who made their maiden speeches and perhaps did not think that they did their best—although I am bound to say that I did not hear any of those—that at least Mr. Archer is an expert on the written word.

I join hon. and right hon. Members in congratulating those new Members who have come through their baptism of fire with such credit during the past week. One of the features of the class of '87 has been the number of them who have made reputations for themselves before coming to this place—in the European Parliament, in local government and in other activities. The House has a tradition, however, of forming its own judgments and of not necessarily accepting the evaluation of others. On their performances so far, the new Members stand to be judged favourably by the House, and we look forward to hearing more from them and from their colleagues.

In accordance with the best spirit of the House, maiden speakers consistently paid tribute to their predecessors. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) spoke for many of us when he commented so generously on his predecessor, Roy Jenkins, whose contribution both to the Government and to Parliament was outstanding. I join also the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneux) and the Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) in their tributes to Enoch Powell, a great parliamentarian, whose absence from this place will be keenly felt.

As well as giving us an opportunity to welcome new Members, the debate has afforded us the chance to welcome back some old friends and adversaries. In particular, I mention the hon. Members for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), for Eccles (Miss Lestor), for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) and for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). All of them spoke most effectively in the debate.

The debate has also been the occasion for some notable speeches, from more experienced Members. I was particularly struck by the thoughtful words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) when he spoke last Thursday about regional issues and the need to ensure that all parts of the country can participate in the success of our economic policies.

On Friday the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) made his final speech from the Front Bench with characteristic style. He spoke of moving to a higher perch from which to select a wider range of quarry. It is one of the great qualities of the right hon. Gentleman that, when he says that, his colleagues on his own Benches know that his sights will not be set solely on the Government.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), in a forceful speech today, called for the fullest possible debate, and I have taken careful note of his call.

I congratulate also my hon. Friends the Members for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) on the way in which they began the proceedings last Thursday. The good humour and the good sense with which they spoke was apparent. They are two distinguished representatives of industrial areas, and I pay tribute to them for their worthwhile contributions to our debate. Their reward has been swift. One of them has won the ballot for private Members' motions on 17 July, and the other was sixth in the ballot for private Members' Bills.

I am pleased also to have this opportunity to pay tribute to my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). As Leader of the House, he showed a deep understanding of the House and its moods, which was based on his experience as a Member for over 25 years. My right hon. Friend remains a "House of Commons man" in the best sense of the term; and I am pleased to have had the opportunity to work with him throughout the last Parliament in managing the Government's business. I cannot hope to equal his wit or eloquence—qualities which he demonstrated again in his speech on Tuesday—but I shall try to emulate his courtesy, patience and willingness to learn.

In my previous incarnation I was, as I am in my present role, concerned with business management, but I recognise that the Leader of the House is not simply the Patronage Secretary with a voice. Herbert Morrison, one of my predecessors, outlined five responsibilities that fall on the Leader of the House: to the Government; to individual

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Ministers concerned with business; to the Government's own supporters on the Back Benches; to the Opposition; and, as importantly, to the House as a whole. He believed that the Leader of the House must regard himself not only as a member of the Government, but as one of the principal guardians of the rights of the House of Commons as a whole. Like my predecessors, I shall try to discharge all those responsibilities as fully and as faithfully as I can.

The House may be beginning to feel, however, that I am taking the vocal aspects of my job too seriously. This is the third occasion on which I have been at the Dispatch Box in as many days. None the less, this is my first speech in the House for some years, because the life in the Whips' Office has precluded my speaking in the Chamber. Looking back, I find that my last speech in the Chamber was over four years ago on an Opposition amendment to the Finance Bill. On that occasion we had a relatively short debate, which was marked by some measures of agreement. At the end of it the Opposition spokesman, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) withdrew his amendment. I hope that it will prove a model for the debates in the future to which I shall contribute.

It is a tradition on these occasions for the Leader of the House to say a few words about House of Commons issues before going on to consider the legislative programme as outlined last week, and the specific theme of today's debate, the use of national resources. Certain issues, of course, arise not only at the beginning of a Parliament. I am aware that there is some interest in the early re-establishment of the Select Committees. That is a recognition of the way in which the Select Committees contributed to the work of the last Parliament, as was made clear by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to him in his role as Chairman of the Liaison Committee during the last Parliament. He fulfilled that role with both effectiveness and distinction.

Mr. Dalyell: Might there not be a case for a Select Committee on the mechanics and implementation of any community charge? Does the Leader of the House not recognise that there are grave difficulties in collection? The matter has not been thought through and the House of Commons should have its say on the mechanics of the poll tax.

Mr. Wakeham: The information and the way in which we arrange Select Committees in the House is always the result of, first, discussion through the usual channels, and, secondly, the matter being brought before the House. The departmental Select Committees were set up so that the workings of individual Departments could be monitored by the House. I see no necessity to have an additional Select Committee to deal with an aspect of Government policy that will be much discussed in the House, and which can perfectly reasonably be discussed by the Select Committees already established for dealing with matters connected either with the Scottish Office or with the Department of the Environment.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): My question is not so much about the establishment of new Select Committees, but I should like to press the Leader

of the House further on the question that I asked him this afternoon. Is it the Government's intention in principle to re-establish a Scottish Select Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no reason to think that we will not establish that, along with all the others, but I do not want to be firm about that until we have had proper discussions through the usual channels to see whether that is the general will of the House.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the right hon. Gentleman now address himself to the democratic issue of whether the Select Committees of the territorial Departments—the Scottish and Welsh Offices—will represent the result of the election in both those countries, or whether they will reflect the balance of power in the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I find that a distorted view of the British constitution. This is a United Kingdom Parliament—a Parliament of the whole of the United Kingdom. The Select Committees are Committees of the House of Commons and should represent its views.

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): I agree entirely with the Leader of the House that this is the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Will he therefore give Northern Ireland the same rights, privileges and responsibilities as Scotland and Wales?

Mr. Wakeham: I am delighted to see the hon. Members from Northern Ireland in their places, playing a full part in the House. Let us see how we go on from there.

I am sure the House will appreciate, however, that the re-establishment of these Committees can take a little time, not least because we wish to proceed on the basis of as much agreement as possible. Aside from the question of membership of the Committees, which itself can be the subject of much discussion, there are proposals for revised arrangements to consider. I have noted for example, the suggestion from my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) with regard to the Foreign Affairs Committee.

I am also aware of the considerable interest that has been shown, not least by my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North, in the arrangements for the Scottish Affairs Committee and other aspects of Scottish and Welsh business which have been mentioned in some of the interventions. I also take note of the suggestions from the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). These arrangements will, of course, be for discussion through the usual channels. However, I say now that I would be happy to see Members from the parties most concerned in these issues if they would find that helpful. I believe that, with an amount of tolerance and understanding on all parts, we can find a practical way through. I assure the whole House that we will use our best endeavours to find an early and generally satisfactory resolution to these questions.

Another matter requiring early resolution is Members' pay. As Members may recall, the resolution passed by the House in July 1983 provided a link between a Member's salary and a particular point on the Civil Service pay scale, but for that to take effect confirmation of the resolution was required within three months of a new Parliament. My intention is, therefore, to provide the House with an opportunity to express a view on this before we rise for the summer recess. Such matters have traditionally been for

the House, rather than the Government, to determine, and I am pleased to have this chance to stress that we have no intention of departing from that tradition on this occasion.

On a similar subject, Members will be aware that not long before Parliament was dissolved we received a report from the Top Salaries Review Body on the secretarial, research and office equipment allowance. Its recommendations, of course, require consultation and discussion with Members on both sides of the House. I shall be setting those consultations in hand soon and will put proposals before the House in the light of them.

It is also clear that the House will wish to have a relatively early debate on the possibility of televising our proceedings. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney raised this subject and it was clear from business questions today that many hon. Gentlemen are interested in this matter. You, Mr. Speaker, in your speech last week showed some concern about the distorted impressions that could be given by the sound broadcast of selected extracts from proceedings. I also note that my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) hoped that we should have an early opportunity to consider and vote on the question of televising.

Early-day motion 15, about the appointment of a Select Committee to consider and make recommendations on the implementation of an experiment in televising proceedings, has already attracted some distinguished signatories. This was, however, the approach which the House rejected by a majority of 12 when we debated the issue in November 1985. The House may recall also an early-day motion in the last Parliament, which attracted 90 signatories, for a different approach to the question of televising. That motion favoured televising Select Committee proceedings. In the light of these expressions of opinion I shall consider most carefully how to present the House with an opportunity for decision.

I should like at this point to say a few words about the role that Parliament can and should play in our affairs. During the election campaign, and indeed afterwards, we heard calls for extra-parliamentary activity from, among others, the hon. Members for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown). Naturally, it is entirely a matter for individual Members how they choose to carry out the responsibilities for which they have been elected, but I hope that the whole House will recognise that this Chamber has a unique function in the national debate. Without going quite as far as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), when in the course of congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, on your re-election he called for more emergency debates, I can join him in stressing the need to discuss in this House matters that are of prime concern.

These issues naturally include the legislation contained in the Queen's Speech. So comprehensive and radical is its nature that it has entirely borne comparison with the programme of the 1945 Government. Some people criticised us — a little unfairly I think — after the 1983 election for not having a clear enough thought through strategy and for not having a bold programme. No one could make either of those charges today. One only has to look, for example, at our proposals on education, housing and trade union reform.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The Government claim that they want to provide more choice in housing and that

people should be able to choose their landlords. Why are the Government not allowing tenants of private landlords to opt for councils to become their landlords? If the Government genuinely believe in freedom, they should let those people choose. If the Government believe in the right to buy, why are they not allowing the tenants of private landlords the right to buy?

Mr. Wakeham: That just shows how little the hon. Gentleman understands the problem. The problem in the private sector is to find any landlords prepared to let any property. The proposals in our manifesto will go a substantial way towards bringing about 500,000 dwellings into use which no landlord is at present prepared to let to any tenant and which are greatly needed to increase the opportunities for rented accommodation for many of our people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) urged us not to let our enthusiasm run away with us. I take note of what he said, and I am sure he will appreciate that, as a business manager, enthusiasm is only one of the feelings with which I approach this ambitious legislative programme.

Undoubtedly, the measure that has dominated the debate has been our proposal to abolish the present discredited rating system and replace it with a community charge. As a business manager, I hope that this level of interest will be reflected in the competition to go on the Standing Committee of the Bill.

I recognise that some of my hon. Friends may have misgivings about the detail of our proposals. There are two points that I should make here. In speaking about the community charge my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said that he would listen to the arguments that have led us to our proposals. I trust that hon. Members in all parts of the House will do so also. At the outset, however, I hope that we can all agree that the present system is in need of reform and that we should replace it with a fairer and more accountable system. Continuing with the present system is not an option. Rates charged on a revaluation of the present 1973 values do not bear thinking about.

The debate will not, of course, focus solely on the legislation that is brought forward. It will range much more widely than that, as this debate has already shown. In the course of today's debate and, indeed, over the last few weeks, Opposition Members have sought to persuade the public that the British economy is in terminal decline and that depression, deprivation and misery are the common lot. The public do not believe it. People know that the rate of inflation has slowed, not just because they read that the inflation rate has dropped from over 10 per cent. in 1979 to 4 per cent. today, but because they see it when they look at the prices in the shops.

People know that our manufacturing industry is much more productive, not just because the figures published by the international institutions show that the United Kingdom's productivity growth has outstripped that of every other major country during the 1980s, but because they see it in their own factories. People know that unemployment is on the way down, not just because the unemployment count has fallen for 11 months in a row in the last month by a record amount but because local newspapers are stuffed full of job advertisements.

Hon. Members should look at the forecast made earlier this week by the London Business School. There is the

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evidence of the latest CBI survey, which is based on how manufacturing companies see the future. The balance of firms expecting an increase in output is at record levels, and so is the balance of firms reporting above normal export order books. This is no flash in the pan. For many months the CBI surveys have produced a similarly positive picture. People overseas understand that perfectly well. The OECD and the IMF both forecast that the United Kingdom will grow faster in 1987 than any other industrial country.

The success of our privatisation programme has helped to bring about a dramatic change in the spread of ownership. The number of shareholders has roughly trebled under this Government and is currently about 8.5 million. Our aim of increasing the spread of ownership is reflected also in the proportion of householders who now own their own homes. It is 63 per cent., the highest ever level. We shall continue to pursue these policies, which have created our economic success. They provide the sound financial background against which we see unemployment falling. Since June 1986 it has gone down by 250,000. Though one would not know it if one listened to the Opposition, it is falling fastest in Wales, the north-west, the west midlands and the north. Since 1983 employment has grown in every region.

Our task is to ensure that all the country participates fully in our economic success. The key is to encourage enterprise, to improve skills, and to target resources carefully on the areas, such as inner cities, with the greatest problems. Urban development corporations have now begun in Tyne and Wear, Teesside, the Black Country and Trafford Park. These follow the Merseyside Development Corporation and the London Docklands Development Corporation. We heard earlier in the debate about their success.

In short, our philosophy is to set the people free, to establish the widest possible spread of property and ownership.

When we came into office in 1979 inflation was running riot. Hardest hit were the pensioners, whose savings collapsed, the skilled workers, who lost out in the wages scramble and the young couples, who longed for a home of their own. Britain was a laughing stock of the world for its strikes. Many key industries were outdated, overmanned and subsidised to keep phoney jobs going.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) rose in this place and claimed to move. That the Question be now put.

Question. That the Question be now put, put and agreed to.

Question put accordingly. That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 255, Noes 353.

Division No. 2]

[10.00 pm

AYES

Allen, Graham	Barnes, Mrs Rosie (Greenwich)
Alton, David	Barron, Kevin
Anderson, Donald	Battle, John
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Beckett, Margaret
Armstrong, Ms Hilary	Beggs, Roy
Ashdown, Paddy	Beith, A. J.
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Bell, Stuart
Ashton, Joe	Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)	Bennett, A. F. (D'n't'n & R'dish)
Barnes, Harry (Derbyshire NE)	Birmingham, Gerald

Bidwell, Sydney	Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Blair, Tony	Grocott, Bruce
Blunkett, David	Harman, Ms Harriet
Boateng, Paul	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Boothroyd, Miss Betty	Haynes, Frank
Boyes, Roland	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Bradley, Keith	Heffer, Eric S.
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Henderson, Douglas
Brown, Gordon (D'mline E)	Hogg, N. (C'nauld & Kilsyth)
Brown, Nicholas (Newcastle E)	Holland, Stuart
Brown, Ron (Edinburgh Leith)	Home Robertson, John
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)	Hood, James
Buchan, Norman	Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Buckley, George	Howell, Rt Hon D. (S'heath)
Caborn, Richard	Howells, Geraint
Callaghan, Jim	Hoyle, Doug
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)	Hughes, John (Coventry NE)
Campbell, Ron (Blyth Valley)	Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Hughes, Sean (Knowsley S)
Canavan, Dennis	Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Carlisle, Alex (Mon't'g)	Hume, John
Cartwright, John	Illsley, Eric
Clark, Dr David (S Shields)	Ingram, Adam
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)	Janner, Greville
Clay, Bob	John, Brynmor
Clelland, David	Jones, Barry (Alyn & Deeside)
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Jones, Ieuan (Ynys Môn)
Cohen, Harry	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Coleman, Donald	Kennedy, Charles
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)	Killedger, James
Cook, Robin (Livingston)	Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Corbett, Robin	Kirkwood, Archy
Corbyn, Jeremy	Lambie, David
Cousins, Jim	Lamond, James
Crowther, Stan	Leadbitter, Ted
Cryer, Bob	Leighton, Ron
Cummings, J.	Lester, Miss Joan (Eccles)
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Lewis, Terry
Cunningham, Dr John	Litherland, Robert
Dalyell, Tam	Livingstone, Ken
Darling, Alastair	Livsey, Richard
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Lanelli)	Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Davis, Terry (B'ham Hodge H')	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Dewar, Donald	Loyden, Eddie
Dixon, Don	McAllion, John
Dobson, Frank	McAvoy, Tom
Doran, Frank	McCartney, Ian
Douglas, Dick	McCrea, Rev William
Dunnachie, James	McCusker, Harold
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth	Macdonald, Calum
Eastham, Ken	McFall, John
Evans, John (St Helens N)	McKelvey, William
Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray)	McLeish, Henry
Fatchett, Derek	MacLennan, Robert
Faulds, Andrew	McNamara, Kevin
Fearn, Ronald	McTaggart, Bob
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)	McWilliam, John
Fields, Terry (L'phol B G'n)	Madden, Max
Fisher, Mark	Maginnis, Ken
Flannery, Martin	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Flynn, Paul	Mallon, Seamus
Foot, Rt Hon Michael	Marek, Dr John
Forsythe, Clifford (Antrim S)	Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Foster, Derek	Marshall, Jim (Leicester S)
Foulkes, George	Martin, Michael (Springburn)
Fraser, John	Martlew, Eric
Fyfe, Mrs Maria	Maxton, John
Galbraith, Samuel	Meacher, Michael
Galloway, George	Meale, Alan
Garrett, John (Norwich South)	Michael, Alun
Garrett, Ted (WallSEND)	Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
George, Bruce	Michie, Mrs Ray (Arg'l & Bute)
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John	Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.	Molyneux, Rt Hon James
Golding, Mrs Llin	Moonie, Dr Lewis
Gordon, Ms Mildred	Morgan, Rhodri
Gould, Bryan	Morley, Elliott
Graham, Thomas	Morris, Rt Hon A. (W'shawe)
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)	Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)	Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie

Mullin, Chris
 Murphy, Paul
 Nellist, Dave
 Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
 O'Brien, William
 O'Neill, Martin
 Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
 Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
 Paisley, Rev Ian
 Parry, Robert
 Patchett, Terry
 Pendry, Tom
 Pike, Peter
 Powell, Ray (*Ogmore*)
 Prescott, John
 Primarolo, Ms Dawn
 Quin, Miss Joyce
 Radice, Giles
 Randall, Stuart
 Redmond, Martin
 Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
 Reid, John
 Richardson, Ms Jo
 Roberts, Allan (*Bootle*)
 Robertson, George
 Robinson, Geoffrey
 Robinson, Peter (*Belfast E*)
 Rogers, Allan
 Rooker, Jeff
 Ross, Ernie (*Dundee W*)
 Ross, William (*Londonderry E*)
 Rowlands, Ted
 Ruddock, Ms Joan
 Salmond, Alex
 Sedgemore, Brian
 Sheerman, Barry
 Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
 Shore, Rt Hon Peter
 Short, Clare
 Skinner, Dennis

Smith, Andrew (*Oxford E*)
 Smith, C. (*Isl'ton & F'bury*)
 Smith, Rt Hon J. (*Monk'ds E*)
 Smyth, Rev Martin (*Belfast S*)
 Snape, Peter
 Soley, Clive
 Spearing, Nigel
 Steel, Rt Hon David
 Steinberg, Gerald
 Stott, Roger
 Strang, Gavin
 Straw, Jack
 Taylor, Mrs Ann (*Dewsbury*)
 Taylor, Rt Hon J. & D. (*S'tord*)
 Taylor, Matthew (*Truro*)
 Thomas, Dafydd Elis
 Turner, Dennis
 Vaz, Keith
 Walker, A. Cecil (*Belfast N*)
 Wall, Pat
 Wallace, James
 Walley, Ms Joan
 Wardell, Gareth (*Gower*)
 Wareing, Robert N.
 Welsh, Andrew (*Angus E*)
 Welsh, Michael (*Doncaster N*)
 Wigley, Dafydd
 Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
 Williams, Alan W. (*Carm'then*)
 Wilson, Brian
 Winnick, David
 Wise, Mrs Audrey
 Worthington, Anthony
 Wray, James
 Young, David (*Bolton SE*)

Tellers for the Ayes:

Mr. Ron Davies and
 Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
 Aitken, Jonathan
 Alexander, Richard
 Alison, Rt Hon Michael
 Allason, Rupert
 Amery, Rt Hon Julian
 Amess, David
 Amos, Alan
 Arbuthnot, James
 Arnold, Jacques (*Gravesham*)
 Arnold, Tom (*Hazel Grove*)
 Ashby, David
 Aspinwall, Jack
 Atkins, Robert
 Atkinson, David
 Baker, Rt Hon K. (*Mole Valley*)
 Baker, Nicholas (*Dorset N*)
 Baldry, Tony
 Banks, Robert (*Harrogate*)
 Batiste, Spencer
 Bellingham, Henry
 Bendall, Vivian
 Bennett, Nicholas (*Pembroke*)
 Benyon, W.
 Bevan, David Gilroy
 Biffen, Rt Hon John
 Biggs-Davison, Sir John
 Blackburn, Dr John G.
 Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
 Bddy, Sir Richard
 Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
 Boswell, Tim
 Bottomley, Peter
 Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
 Bowden, A. (*Brighton K'pto'n*)
 Bowden, Gerald (*Dulwich*)
 Bowis, John
 Boyson, Rt Hon Cr Sir Rhodes

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
 Brandon-Bravo, Martin
 Brazier, Julian
 Bright, Graham
 Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
 Brown, Michael (*Brigg & Cl'ts*)
 Browne, John (*Winchester*)
 Bruce, Ian (*Dorset South*)
 Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
 Buck, Sir Antony
 Budgen, Nicholas
 Burns, Simon
 Burt, Alistair
 Butcher, John
 Butler, Chris
 Butterfill, John
 Carlisle, John, (*Luton N*)
 Carlisle, Kenneth (*Lincoln*)
 Carrington, Matthew
 Cartiss, Michael
 Cash, William
 Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
 Channon, Rt Hon Paul
 Chapman, Sydney
 Chope, Christopher
 Churchill, Mr
 Clark, Hon Alan (*Plym'th S'n*)
 Clark, Dr Michael (*Rochford*)
 Clark, Sir W. (*Croydon S*)
 Clarke, Rt Hon K. (*Rushcliffe*)
 Colvin, Michael
 Conway, Derek
 Coombs, Anthony (*Wyre F'rest*)
 Coombs, Simon (*Swindon*)
 Coppi, John
 Cormack, Patrick
 Couchman, James
 Cran, James

Critchley, Julian
 Currie, Mrs Edwina
 Curry, David
 Davies, Q. (*Stam'd & Spald'g*)
 Davis, David (*Boothferry*)
 Day, Stephen
 Devlin, Tim
 Dickens, Geoffrey
 Dicks, Terry
 Dorrell, Stephen
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
 Dover, Den
 Dunn, Bob
 Durant, Tony
 Dykes, Hugh
 Eggar, Tim
 Emery, Sir Peter
 Evans, David (*Welwyn Half'd*)
 Evennett, David
 Fairbairn, Nicholas
 Fallon, Michael
 Farr, Sir John
 Favell, Tony
 Fenner, Dame Peggy
 Field, Barry (*Isle of Wight*)
 Fookes, Miss Janet
 Forman, Nigel
 Forsyth, Michael (*Stirling*)
 Forth, Eric
 Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
 Fox, Sir Marcus
 Franks, Cecil
 Freeman, Roger
 French, Douglas
 Fry, Peter
 Gale, Roger
 Gardiner, George
 Gill, Christopher
 Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
 Glyn, Dr Alan
 Goodhart, Sir Philip
 Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
 Gorman, Mrs Teresa
 Gorst, John
 Gow, Ian
 Gower, Sir Raymond
 Grant, Sir Anthony (*CambsSW*)
 Greenway, Harry (*Ealing N*)
 Greenway, John (*Rydale*)
 Gregory, Conal
 Griffiths, Sir Eldon (*Bury St E'*)
 Griffiths, Peter (*Portsmouth N*)
 Grist, Ian
 Ground, Patrick
 Grylls, Michael
 Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
 Hamilton, Hon A. (*Epsom*)
 Hamilton, Neil (*Tatton*)
 Hampson, Dr Keith
 Hanley, Jeremy
 Hannam, John
 Hargreaves, A. (*B'ham H'll Gr'*)
 Hargreaves, Ken (*Hyndburn*)
 Harris, David
 Haselhurst, Alan
 Hawkins, Christopher
 Hayes, Jerry
 Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
 Hayward, Robert
 Heath, Rt Hon Edward
 Heddle, John
 Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
 Hicks, Mrs Maureen (*Wolv' NE*)
 Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
 Hill, James
 Hind, Kenneth
 Holt, Richard
 Hordern, Sir Peter
 Howard, Michael
 Howarth, Alan (*Strat'd-on-A*)
 Howarth, G. (*Cannock & B'wd*)
 Howell, Rt Hon David (*G'dford*)
 Howell, Ralph (*North Norfolk*)
 Hughes, Robert G. (*Harrow W*)
 Hunt, David (*Wirral W*)
 Hunt, John (*Ravensbourne*)
 Hunter, Andrew
 Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
 Irvine, Michael
 Irving, Charles
 Jack, Michael
 Jackson, Robert
 Janman, Timothy
 Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
 Jones, Gwilym (*Cardiff N*)
 Jones, Robert B. (*Herts W*)
 Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
 Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
 Key, Robert
 King, Roger (*B'ham N'thfield*)
 King, Rt Hon Tom (*Bridgwater*)
 Kirkhope, Timothy
 Knapman, Roger
 Knight, Greg (*Derby North*)
 Knight, Dame Jill (*Edgbaston*)
 Knowles, Michael
 Knox, David
 Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
 Lang, Ian
 Latham, Michael
 Lawrence, Ivan
 Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
 Lee, John (*Pendle*)
 Leigh, Edward (*Gainsbor'gh*)
 Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
 Lester, Jim (*Broxtowe*)
 Lightbown, David
 Lilley, Peter
 Lloyd, Sir Ian (*Havant*)
 Lloyd, Peter (*Fareham*)
 Lord, Michael
 Lyell, Sir Nicholas
 McCrindle, Robert
 Macfarlane, Neil
 MacGregor, John
 MacKay, Andrew (*E Berkshire*)
 Maclean, David
 McLoughlin, Patrick
 McNair-Wilson, M. (*Newbury*)
 McNair-Wilson, P. (*New Forest*)
 Madel, David
 Major, Rt Hon John
 Malins, Humfrey
 Mans, Keith
 Maples, John
 Marlow, Tony
 Marshall, John (*Hendon S*)
 Marshall, Michael (*Arundel*)
 Martin, David (*Portsmouth S*)
 Mates, Michael
 Maude, Hon Francis
 Mawhinney, Dr Brian
 Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
 Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
 Mellor, David
 Meyer, Sir Anthony
 Miller, Hal
 Mills, Ian
 Miscampbell, Norman
 Mitchell, Andrew (*Gedling*)
 Mitchell, David (*Hants NW*)
 Moate, Roger
 Monro, Sir Hector
 Montgomery, Sir Fergus
 Moore, Rt Hon John
 Morris, M. (*N'hampton S*)
 Morrison, Hon C. (*Devizes*)
 Morrison, Hon P. (*Chester*)
 Moss, Malcolm
 Moynihan, Hon C.

Mudd, David
 Neale, Gerrard
 Needham, Richard
 Nelson, Anthony
 Neubert, Michael
 Newton, Tony
 Nicholls, Patrick
 Nicholson, David (*Taunton*)
 Nicholson, Miss E. (*Devon W*)
 Onslow, Cranley
 Oppenheim, Phillip
 Page, Richard
 Paice, James
 Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
 Patrick, Irvine
 Patten, Chris (*Bath*)
 Patten, John (*Oxford W*)
 Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
 Pawsey, James
 Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
 Porter, Barry (*Wirral S*)
 Porter, David (*Waveney*)
 Portillo, Michael
 Powell, William (*Corby*)
 Price, Sir David
 Raffan, Keith
 Reason, Rt Hon Timothy
 Rathbone, Tim
 Redwood, John
 Renton, Tim
 Rhodes James, Robert
 Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
 Riddick, Graham
 Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
 Ridsdale, Sir Julian
 Roberts, Wyn (*Conwy*)
 Roe, Mrs Marion
 Rossi, Sir Hugh
 Rost, Peter
 Rowe, Andrew
 Rumbold, Mrs Angela
 Ryder, Richard
 Sackville, Hon Tom
 Sainsbury, Hon Tim
 Sayeed, Jonathan
 Shaw, David (*Dover*)
 Shaw, Sir Giles (*Pudsey*)
 Shaw, Sir Michael (*Scarb*)
 Shelton, William (*Streatham*)
 Shephard, Mrs G. (*Norfolk SW*)
 Shepherd, Colin (*Hereford*)
 Shepherd, Richard (*Aldridge*)
 Shersby, Michael
 Sims, Roger
 Skeet, Sir Trevor
 Smith, Sir Dudley (*Warwick*)
 Smith, Tim (*Beaconsfield*)
 Soames, Hon Nicholas
 Speed, Keith
 Speller, Tony
 Spicer, Jim (*Dorset W*)

Spicer, Michael (*S Worcs*)
 Squire, Robin
 Stanbrook, Ivor
 Steen, Anthony
 Stern, Michael
 Stevens, Lewis
 Stewart, Allan (*Eastwood*)
 Stewart, Andrew (*Sherwood*)
 Stewart, Ian (*Hertfordshire N*)
 Stradling Thomas, Sir John
 Sumberg, David
 Summerson, Hugo
 Tapsell, Sir Peter
 Taylor, Ian (*Esher*)
 Taylor, John M (*Solihull*)
 Taylor, Teddy (*S'end E*)
 Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
 Temple-Morris, Peter
 Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
 Thompson, D. (*Calder Valley*)
 Thompson, Patrick (*Norwich N*)
 Thorne, Neil
 Thornton, Malcolm
 Thurnham, Peter
 Townend, John (*Bridlington*)
 Townsend, Cyril D. (*B'heath*)
 Tracey, Richard
 Tredinnick, David
 Trippier, David
 Trotter, Neville
 Twinn, Dr Ian
 Vaughan, Sir, Gerard
 Waddington, Rt Hon David
 Wakeham, Rt Hon John
 Waldegrave, Hon William
 Walden, George
 Walker, Bill (*T'side North*)
 Walker, Rt Hon P. (*W'cester*)
 Waller, Gary
 Walters, Dennis
 Ward, John
 Wardle, C. (*Bexhill*)
 Warren, Kenneth
 Watts, John
 Wells, Bowen
 Wheeler, John
 Whitney, Ray
 Widdecombe, Miss Ann
 Wiggin, Jerry
 Wilshire, David
 Winterton, Mrs Ann
 Winterton, Nicholas
 Wolfson, Mark
 Wood, Timothy
 Woodcock, Mike
 Young, Sir George (*Acton*)

Tellers for the Noes:
 Mr. Robert Boscawen and
 Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

government through the introduction of proportional representation and a local income tax, the Gracious Speech contains proposals for an unfair and unworkable poll tax; and further regret that the proposals in the Gracious Speech will place excessive powers in the hands of the Secretary of State for Education and Science without increasing the resources available for education and training. — [Mr. Steel.]

Question put. That the amendment be made:—
 The House divided: Ayes 26, Noes 351.

Division No. 3]

[10.15 pm

AYES

Ashtown, Paddy
 Barnes, Mrs Rosie (*Greenwich*)
 Beith, A. J.
 Bruce, Malcolm (*Gordon*)
 Campbell, Menzies (*File NE*)
 Carlile, Alex (*Mont'g*)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (*Moray*)
 Fearn, Ronald
 Howells, Geraint
 Hughes, Simon (*Southwark*)
 Hume, John
 Jones, Ieuan (*Ynys Môn*)
 Kennedy, Charles
 Kirkwood, Archy
 Livsey, Richard
 MacIennan, Robert
 Mallon, Seamus
 Michie, Mrs Ray (*Arg'l & Bute*)
 Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
 Salmond, Alex
 Steel, Rt Hon David
 Taylor, Matthew (*Truro*)
 Thomas, Dafydd Elis
 Wallace, James
 Welsh, Andrew (*Angus E*)
 Wigley, Dafydd
 Tellers for the Ayes:
 Mr. David Alton and
 Mr. John Cartwright.

NOES

Adley, Robert
 Aitken, Jonathan
 Alexander, Richard
 Alison, Rt Hon Michael
 Allason, Rupert
 Amess, David
 Amos, Alan
 Arbuthnot, James
 Arnold, Jacques (*Gravesham*)
 Arnold, Tom (*Hazel Grove*)
 Ashby, David
 Aspinwall, Jack
 Atkins, Robert
 Atkinson, David
 Baker, Rt Hon K. (*Mole Valley*)
 Baker, Nicholas (*Dorset N*)
 Baldry, Tony
 Banks, Robert (*Harrogate*)
 Batiste, Spencer
 Bellingham, Henry
 Bendall, Vivian
 Bennett, Nicholas (*Pembroke*)
 Benyon, W.
 Bevan, David Gilroy
 Biffen, Rt Hon John
 Biggs-Davison, Sir John
 Blackburn, Dr John G.
 Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
 Body, Sir Richard
 Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
 Boswell, Tim
 Bottomley, Peter
 Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
 Bowden, A (*Brighton K'pto'n*)
 Bowden, Gerald (*Dulwich*)
 Bowis, John
 Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
 Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
 Brandon-Bravo, Martin
 Brazier, Julian
 Bright, Graham
 Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
 Brown, Michael (*Brigg & Cl't's*)
 Browne, John (*Winchester*)
 Bruce, Ian (*Dorset South*)
 Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
 Buck, Sir Antony
 Budgen, Nicholas
 Burns, Simon
 Burt, Alistair
 Butcher, John
 Butler, Chris
 Butterfill, John
 Carlisle, John, (*Luton N*)
 Carlisle, Kenneth (*Lincoln*)
 Carrington, Matthew
 Carttiss, Michael
 Cash, William
 Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
 Channon, Rt Hon Paul
 Chapman, Sydney
 Chope, Christopher
 Churchill, Mr
 Clark, Hon Alan (*Plym'th S'n*)
 Clark, Dr Michael (*Rochford*)
 Clark, Sir W. (*Croydon S*)
 Clarke, Rt Hon K. (*Rushcliffe*)
 Colvin, Michael
 Conway, Derek
 Coombs, Anthony (*Wyre F'rest*)
 Coombs, Simon (*Swindon*)
 Cope, John
 Cormack, Patrick
 Couchman, James
 Cran, James
 Currie, Mrs Edwina
 Gurry, David
 Davies, Q. (*Stamf'd & Spald'g*)
 Davis, David (*Boothferry*)
 Day, Stephen
 Devlin, Tim
 Dickens, Geoffrey
 Dicks, Terry
 Dorrell, Stephen
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
 Dover, Den
 Dunn, Bob
 Durant, Tony
 Dykes, Hugh
 Eggar, Tim
 Emery, Sir Peter
 Evans, David (*Welwyn Hatf'd*)
 Evennett, David
 Fairbairn, Nicholas
 Fallon, Michael
 Farr, Sir John
 Favell, Tony
 Fenner, Dams Peggy

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 32 (*Calling of amendments at end of debate*), at the end of the Question add:

but humbly regret that the proposals set out in the Gracious Speech do not deal with the problems of a nation that is socially divided and politically over-centralised; believe that the Gracious Speech should have contained proposals for the regeneration of manufacturing industry through a partnership between central government, local government and private enterprise, for the promotion of worker participation in the management of their companies, for measures to devolve power to the Scottish and Welsh people through a directly elected Scottish parliament and a directly elected Welsh Senedd, and for membership of the exchange rate mechanism of the European Monetary System; regret that instead of enhancing the authority and accountability of local

Field, Barry (*Isle of Wight*)
 Fookes, Miss Janet
 Forman, Nigel
 Forsyth, Michael (*Stirling*)
 Forth, Eric
 Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
 Fox, Sir Marcus
 Franks, Cecil
 Freeman, Roger
 French, Douglas
 Fry, Peter
 Gale, Roger
 Gardiner, George
 Gill, Christopher
 Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
 Glyn, Dr Alan
 Goodhart, Sir Philip
 Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
 Gorman, Mrs Teresa
 Gorst, John
 Gow, Ian
 Gower, Sir Raymond
 Grant, Sir Anthony (*CambsSW*)
 Greenway, Harry (*Ealing N*)
 Greenway, John (*Rydale*)
 Gregory, Conal
 Griffiths, Peter (*Portsmouth N*)
 Grist, Ian
 Ground, Patrick
 Grylls, Michael
 Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
 Hamilton, Hon A. (*Epsom*)
 Hamilton, Neil (*Tatton*)
 Hampson, Dr Keith
 Hann, Jeremy
 Hannam, John
 Hargreaves, A. (*B'ham H'll Gr*)
 Hargreaves, Ken (*Hyndburn*)
 Harris, David
 Haselhurst, Alan
 Hawkins, Christopher
 Hayes, Jerry
 Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
 Hayward, Robert
 Heath, Rt Hon Edward
 Hedgle, John
 Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
 Hicks, Mrs Maureen (*Wolv' NE*)
 Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
 Hill, James
 Hind, Kenneth
 Holt, Richard
 Hordern, Sir Peter
 Howard, Michael
 Howarth, Alan (*Strat'd-on-A*)
 Howarth, G. (*Cannock & B'wd*)
 Howell, Rt Hon David (*G'dford*)
 Howell, Ralph (*North Norfolk*)
 Hughes, Robert G. (*Harrow W*)
 Hunt, David (*Wirral W*)
 Hunt, John (*Ravensbourne*)
 Hunter, Andrew
 Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
 Irvine, Michael
 Irving, Charles
 Jack, Michael
 Jackson, Robert
 Janman, Timothy
 Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
 Jones, Gwilym (*Cardiff N*)
 Jones, Robert B. (*Herts W*)
 Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
 Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
 Key, Robert
 King, Roger (*B'ham N'thfield*)
 King, Rt Hon Tom (*Bridgwater*)
 Kirkhope, Timothy
 Knapman, Roger
 Knight, Greg (*Derby North*)
 Knight, Dame Jill (*Edgbaston*)

Knowles, Michael
 Knox, David
 Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
 Lang, Ian
 Latham, Michael
 Lawrence, Ivan
 Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
 Lee, John (*Pendle*)
 Leigh, Edward (*Gainsbor'gh*)
 Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
 Lester, Jim (*Broxtowe*)
 Lightbown, David
 Lilley, Peter
 Lloyd, Sir Ian (*Havant*)
 Lloyd, Peter (*Fareham*)
 Lord, Michael
 Lyell, Sir Nicholas
 McCrindle, Robert
 Macfarlane, Neil
 MacGregor, John
 MacKay, Andrew (*E Berkshire*)
 Maclean, David
 McLoughlin, Patrick
 McNair-Wilson, M. (*Newbury*)
 McNair-Wilson, P. (*New Forest*)
 Madel, David
 Major, Rt Hon John
 Malins, Humphrey
 Mans, Keith
 Maples, John
 Marlow, Tony
 Marshall, John (*Hendon S*)
 Marshall, Michael (*Arundel*)
 Martin, David (*Portsmouth S*)
 Mates, Michael
 Maude, Hon Francis
 Mawhinney, Dr Brian
 Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
 Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
 Mellor, David
 Meyer, Sir Anthony
 Miller, Hal
 Mills, Iain
 Miscampbell, Norman
 Mitchell, Andrew (*Gedling*)
 Mitchell, David (*Hants NW*)
 Moate, Roger
 Monro, Sir Hector
 Montgomery, Sir Fergus
 Moore, Rt Hon John
 Morris, M. (*N'hampton S*)
 Morrison, Hon C. (*Devizes*)
 Morrison, Hon P. (*Chester*)
 Moss, Malcolm
 Moynihan, Hon C.
 Mudd, David
 Neale, Gerrard
 Needham, Richard
 Nelson, Anthony
 Neubert, Michael
 Newton, Tony
 Nicholls, Patrick
 Nicholson, David (*Taunton*)
 Nicholson, Miss E. (*Devon W*)
 Onslow, Cranley
 Oppenheim, Phillip
 Page, Richard
 Paice, James
 Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
 Patnick, Irvine
 Patten, Chris (*Bath*)
 Patten, John (*Oxford W*)
 Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
 Pawsey, James
 Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
 Porter, Barry (*Wirral S*)
 Porter, David (*Waveney*)
 Portillo, Michael
 Powell, William (*Corby*)
 Price, Sir David

Raffan, Keith
 Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
 Rathbone, Tim
 Redwood, John
 Renton, Tim
 Rhodes James, Robert
 Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
 Riddick, Graham
 Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
 Ridsdale, Sir Julian
 Roberts, Wyn (*Conwy*)
 Roe, Mrs Marion
 Rossi, Sir Hugh
 Rost, Peter
 Rowe, Andrew
 Rumbold, Mrs Angela
 Ryder, Richard
 Sackville, Hon Tom
 Sainsbury, Hon Tim
 Sayeed, Jonathan
 Shaw, David (*Dover*)
 Shaw, Sir Giles (*Pudsey*)
 Shaw, Sir Michael (*Scarb'*)
 Shelton, William (*Streatham*)
 Shephard, Mrs G. (*Norfolk SW*)
 Shepherd, Colin (*Hereford*)
 Shepherd, Richard (*Aldridge*)
 Shersby, Michael
 Sims, Roger
 Skeet, Sir Trevor
 Smith, Sir Dudley (*Warwick*)
 Smith, Tim (*Beaconsfield*)
 Soames, Hon Nicholas
 Speed, Keith
 Speller, Tony
 Spicer, Jim (*Dorset W*)
 Spicer, Michael (*S Worcs*)
 Squire, Robin
 Stanbrook, Ivor
 Steen, Anthony
 Stern, Michael
 Stevens, Lewis
 Stewart, Allan (*Eastwood*)
 Stewart, Andrew (*Sherwood*)
 Stewart, Ian (*Hertfordshire N*)
 Stradling, Thomas, Sir John
 Sumberg, David
 Summerson, Hugo
 Tapsell, Sir Peter.

Taylor, Ian (*Esher*)
 Taylor, John M. (*Solihull*)
 Taylor, Teddy (*S'end E*)
 Tebbitt, Rt Hon Norman
 Temple-Morris, Peter
 Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
 Thompson, D. (*Calder Valley*)
 Thompson, Patrick (*Norwich N*)
 Thorne, Neil
 Thornton, Malcolm
 Thurnham, Peter
 Townend, John (*Bridlington*)
 Townsend, Cyril D. (*B'heath*)
 Tracey, Richard
 Tredinnick, David
 Trippier, David
 Trotter, Neville
 Twinn, Dr Ian
 Vaughan, Sir Gerard
 Waddington, Rt Hon David
 Wakeham, Rt Hon John
 Waldegrave, Hon William
 Walden, George
 Walker, Bill (*T'side North*)
 Walker, Rt Hon P. (*W'cester*)
 Waller, Gary
 Walters, Dennis
 Ward, John
 Wardle, C. (*Bexhill*)
 Warren, Kenneth
 Watts, John
 Wells, Bowen
 Wheeler, John
 Whitney, Ray
 Widdcombe, Miss Ann
 Wiggin, Jerry
 Wilshire, David
 Winterton, Mrs Ann
 Winterton, Nicholas
 Wolfson, Mark
 Wood, Timothy
 Woodcock, Mike
 Yeo, Tim
 Young, Sir George (*Acton*)

Tellers for the Noes:
 Mr. Robert Boscawen and
 Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negated.

Main Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 347, Noes 247.

Division No. 4]

[10.25 pm

AYES

Adley, Robert
 Aitken, Jonathan
 Alexander, Richard
 Alison, Rt Hon Michael
 Allison, Rupert
 Amess, David
 Amos, Alan
 Arbuthnot, James
 Arnold, Jacques (*Gravesham*)
 Arnold, Tom (*Hazel Grove*)
 Ashby, David
 Aspinwall, Jack
 Atkins, Robert
 Atkinson, David
 Baker, Rt Hon K. (*Mole Valley*)
 Baker, Nicholas (*Dorset N*)
 Baldry, Tony
 Banks, Robert (*Harrogate*)
 Batiste, Spencer
 Bellingham, Henry
 Bendall, Vivian
 Bennett, Nicholas (*Pembroke*)
 Benyon, W.
 Bevan, David Gilroy
 Biffen, Rt Hon John
 Biggs-Davison, Sir John
 Blackburn, Dr John G.
 Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
 Body, Sir Richard
 Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
 Boswell, Tim
 Bottomley, Peter
 Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
 Bowden, A. (*Brighton K'pto'n*)
 Bowden, Gerald (*Dulwich*)
 Bowis, John
 Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
 Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
 Brandon-Bravo, Martin
 Brazier, Julian
 Bright, Graham
 Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
 Brown, Michael (*Brigg & C't's*)
 Browne, John (*Winchester*)
 Bruce, Ian (*Dorset South*)
 Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick

Buck, Sir Antony
 Budgen, Nicholas
 Burns, Simon
 Burt, Alistair
 Butcher, John
 Butler, Chris
 Butterfill, John
 Carlisle, John, (Luton N)
 Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
 Carrington, Matthew
 Cartliss, Michael
 Cash, William
 Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
 Channon, Rt Hon Paul
 Chapman, Sydney
 Chope, Christopher
 Churchill, Mr
 Clark, Hon Alan (Plym'th S'n)
 Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
 Clark, Sir W. (Croydon S)
 Clarke, Rt Hon K. (Rushcliffe)
 Colvin, Michael
 Conway, Derek
 Coombs, Anthony (Wyre F'rest)
 Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
 Cope, John
 Cormack, Patrick
 Couchman, James
 Cran, James
 Currie, Mrs Edwina
 Curry, David
 Davies, Q. (Stam'd & Spald'g)
 Davis, David (Boothferry)
 Day, Stephen
 Devlin, Tim
 Dickens, Geoffrey
 Dicks, Terry
 Dorrrell, Stephen
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
 Dover, Den
 Dunn, Bob
 Durant, Tony
 Dykes, Hugh
 Eggar, Tim
 Emery, Sir Peter
 Evans, David (Welwyn Hat't'd)
 Evennett, David
 Fairbairn, Nicholas
 Fallon, Michael
 Farr, Sir John
 Favell, Tony
 Fenner, Dame Peggy
 Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
 Fookes, Miss Janet
 Forman, Nigel
 Forsyth, Michael (Stirling)
 Forth, Eric
 Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
 Fox, Sir Marcus
 Franks, Cecil
 Freeman, Roger
 French, Douglas
 Fry, Peter
 Gale, Roger
 Gardiner, George
 Gill, Christopher
 Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
 Glyn, Dr Alan
 Goodhart, Sir Philip
 Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
 Gorman, Mrs Teresa
 Gorst, John
 Gow, Ian
 Gower, Sir Raymond
 Grant, Sir Anthony (CambsSW)
 Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
 Greenway, John (Rydale)
 Gregory, Conal
 Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth N)
 Grist, Ian

Ground, Patrick
 Grylls, Michael
 Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
 Hamilton, Hon A. (Epsom)
 Hamilton, Neil (Tahon)
 Hampson, Dr Keith
 Hanley, Jeremy
 Hannam, John
 Hargreaves, A. (B'ham H'll Gr')
 Hargreaves, Ken (Hyndburn)
 Harris, David
 Haselhurst, Alan
 Hawkins, Christopher
 Hayes, Jerry
 Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
 Hayward, Robert
 Heath, Rt Hon Edward
 Heddle, John
 Heselline, Rt Hon Michael
 Hicks, Mrs Maureen (Wolv' NE)
 Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
 Hill, James
 Hind, Kenneth
 Holt, Richard
 Hordern, Sir Peter
 Howard, Michael
 Howarth, Alan (Strat'd-on-A)
 Howarth, G. (Cannock & B'wd)
 Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
 Howell, Ralph (North Norfolk)
 Hughes, Robert G. (Harrow W)
 Hunt, David (Wirral W)
 Hunt, John (Ravensbourne)
 Hunter, Andrew
 Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
 Irvine, Michael
 Jack, Michael
 Jackson, Robert
 Janman, Timothy
 Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
 Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
 Jones, Robert B. (Herts W)
 Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
 Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
 Key, Robert
 King, Roger (B'ham N'thfield)
 King, Rt Hon Tom (Bridgwater)
 Kirkhope, Timothy
 Knapman, Roger
 Knight, Greg (Derby North)
 Knight, Dame Jill (Edgbaston)
 Knowles, Michael
 Knox, David
 Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
 Lang, Ian
 Latham, Michael
 Lawrence, Ivan
 Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
 Lee, John (Pendle)
 Leigh, Edward (Gainsbor'gh)
 Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
 Lester, Jim (Broxtove)
 Lightbown, David
 Lilley, Peter
 Lloyd, Sir Ian (Havant)
 Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
 Lord, Michael
 Lyell, Sir Nicholas
 McCrindle, Robert
 Macfarlane, Neil
 MacGregor, John
 MacKay, Andrew (E Berkshire)
 Maclean, David
 McLoughlin, Patrick
 McNair-Wilson, M. (Newbury)
 McNair-Wilson, P. (New Forest)
 Madel, David
 Major, Rt Hon John
 Malins, Humphrey
 Mans, Keith

Maples, John
 Marlow, Tohy
 Marshall, John (Hendon S)
 Marshall, Michael (Arundel)
 Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
 Mates, Michael
 Maude, Hon Francis
 Mawhinney, Dr Brian
 Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
 Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
 Mellor, David
 Meyer, Sir Anthony
 Miller, Hal
 Mills, Iain
 Miscampbell, Norman
 Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
 Mitchell, David (Hants NW)
 Moate, Roger
 Montgomery, Sir Fergus
 Moore, Rt Hon John
 Morris, M. (N'hampton S)
 Morrison, Hon C. (Devizes)
 Morrison, Hon P. (Chester)
 Moss, Malcolm
 Moynihan, Hon C.
 Mudd, David
 Neale, Gerrard
 Needham, Richard
 Nelson, Anthony
 Neubert, Michael
 Newton, Tony
 Nicholls, Patrick
 Nicholson, David (Taunton)
 Nicholson, Miss E. (Devon W)
 Onslow, Cranley
 Oppenheim, Phillip
 Page, Richard
 Paice, James
 Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
 Patnick, Irvine
 Patten, Chris (Bath)
 Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
 Pawsey, James
 Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
 Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
 Porter, David (Waveney)
 Portillo, Michael
 Powell, William (Corby)
 Price, Sir David
 Raffan, Keith
 Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
 Rathbone, Tim
 Redwood, John
 Renton, Tim
 Rhodes James, Robert
 Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
 Riddick, Graham
 Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
 Ridsdale, Sir Julian
 Roberts, Wyn (Conwy)
 Roe, Mrs Marion
 Rossi, Sir Hugh
 Rost, Peter
 Rowe, Andrew
 Rumbold, Mrs Angela
 Ryder, Richard
 Sackville, Hon Tom
 Sainsbury, Hon Tim
 Sayeed, Jonathan
 Shaw, David (Dover)
 Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
 Shaw, Sir Michael (Scarb')
 Shelton, William (Streatham)

Shephard, Mrs G. (Norfolk SW)
 Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
 Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
 Shersby, Michael
 Sims, Roger
 Skeet, Sir Trevor
 Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
 Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
 Soames, Hon Nicholas
 Speed, Keith
 Speller, Tony
 Spicer, Jim (Dorset W)
 Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
 Squire, Robin
 Stanbrook, Ivor
 Steen, Anthony
 Stern, Michael
 Stevens, Lewis
 Stewart, Allan (Eastwood)
 Stewart, Andrew (Sherwood)
 Stewart, Ian (Hertfordshire N)
 Stradling, Thomas, Sir John
 Sumberg, David
 Summerson, Hugo
 Tapsell, Sir Peter
 Taylor, Ian (Essex)
 Taylor, John M. (Solihull)
 Taylor, Teddy (S'end E)
 Tebbitt, Rt Hon Norman
 Temple-Morris, Peter
 Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
 Thompson, D. (Calder Valley)
 Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
 Thorie, Neil
 Thornton, Malcolm
 Thurnham, Peter
 Townend, John (Bridlington)
 Townsend, Cyril D. (B'heath)
 Tracey, Richard
 Tredinnick, David
 Trippier, David
 Trotter, Neville
 Twinn, Dr Ian
 Vaughan, Sir Gerard
 Waddington, Rt Hon David
 Wakeham, Rt Hon John
 Waldegrave, Hon William
 Walden, George
 Walker, Bill (T'side North)
 Walker, Rt Hon P. (W'cester)
 Waller, Gary
 Walters, Dennis
 Ward, John
 Wardle, C. (Bexhill)
 Warren, Kenneth
 Watts, John
 Wells, Bowen
 Wheeler, John
 Whitney, Ray
 Wildecornbe, Miss Ann
 Wilshire, David
 Winterton, Mrs Ann
 Winterton, Nicholas
 Wolfson, Mark
 Wood, Timothy
 Woodcock, Mike
 Yeo, Tim
 Young, Sir George (Acton)

Tellers for the Ayes:

Mr. Robert Boscawen and
 Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Ashdown, Paddy
 Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
 Barnes, Harry (Derbyshire NE)
 Barnes, Mrs Rosie (Greenwich)
 Barron, Kevin

Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. (*D'n't'n & R'dish*)
Birmingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (*D'mline E*)
Brown, Nicholas (*Newcastle E*)
Brown, Ron (*Edinburgh Leith*)
Bruce, Malcolm (*Gordon*)
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies (*Fife NE*)
Campbell, Ron (*Blyth Valley*)
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carliile, Alex (*Mont'g*)
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David (*S Shields*)
Clarke, Tom (*Monklands W*)
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank (*Stockton N*)
Cook, Robin (*Livingston*)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (*Lanelli*)
Davies, Ron (*Caerphilly*)
Davis, Terry (*B'ham Hodge H'l*)
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John (*St Helens N*)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret (*Moray*)
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank (*Birkenhead*)
Fields, Terry (*L'pool B G'n*)
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford (*Antrim S*)
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyle, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John (*Norwich South*)
Garrett, Ted (*Wallsend*)

George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant Bernie (*Tottenham*)
Griffiths, Nigel (*Edinburgh S*)
Griffiths, Win (*Bridgend*)
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hogg, N. (*C'nauld & Kilsyth*)
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George (*Knowsley N*)
Howell, Rt Hon D. (*S'heath*)
Howells, Gerald
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John (*Coventry NE*)
Hughes, Robert (*Aberdeen N*)
Hughes, Sean (*Knowsley S*)
Hughes, Simon (*Southwark*)
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry (*Alyn & Deeside*)
Jones, Ieuan (*Ynys Môn*)
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnoch, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan (*Eccles*)
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony (*Stretford*)
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Louden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
McCusker, Harold
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
MacLennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (*Shettleston*)
Marshall, Jim (*Leicester S*)
Martin, Michael (*Springburn*)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (*Sheffield Heeley*)
Michie, Mrs Ray (*Arg'l & Bute*)
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Molyneux, Rt Hon James

Mooney, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. (*W'shawe*)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (*Aberavon*)
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray (*Ogmore*)
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Miss Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter (*Belfast E*)
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie (*Dundee W*)
Ross, William (*Londonderry E*)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter

Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (*Oxford E*)
Smith, C. (*Isl'ton & F'bury*)
Smith, Rt Hon J. (*Monk'ds E*)
Smyth, Rev Martin (*Belfast S*)
Snake, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann (*Dewsbury*)
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. (*S'tord*)
Taylor, Matthew (*Truro*)
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil (*Belfast N*)
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth (*Gower*)
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew (*Angus E*)
Welsh, Michael (*Doncaster N*)
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David (*Bolton SE*)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:—

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

To be presented by Privy Councillors or Members of Her Majesty's Household.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Ordered,

That so much of the Lords Message of 29th June as relates to a Joint Committee of both Houses to scrutinise delegated legislation be now considered.—[Mr. David Hunt.]

Lords Message considered accordingly.

Resolved,

That this House doth concur with the Lords in the said Resolution.—[Mr. David Hunt.]

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That during the proceedings on the matter of the Queen's Speech and its effects on Wales, the Welsh Grand Committee have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet, and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meetings of standing committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before Four o'clock nor continue after the Committee has considered the matter for two hours at that sitting.—[Mr. Dorrell.]

Liverpool

Motion made, and Question proposed. That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Dorrell.]

10.43 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I am sure that the House is most interested to know that at last the Prime Minister recognises that our cities have very real problems. Some of us have been concerned with those problems for a long time.

In this Adjournment debate, I am raising not just the inner city problems of Liverpool, I am raising the problems of the city as a whole. We cannot divorce one from the other. There cannot be a solution to the inner city problems of Liverpool without a solution to the problems of the whole city. I want to make that absolutely clear.

I am not raising the problems of Liverpool purely for propaganda purposes. The needs of the people of Liverpool are very serious. The city needs much more genuine assistance than it has received, despite what Lord Young and others have said about the support given to Liverpool.

Our city is a victim of its history. It was a great port, handling a quarter of Britain's imports and exports. Until after the second world war, its industries related to the port. To that extent, the economy was unbalanced. With the decline of the port through the growth of air traffic, Britain's entry into the Common Market, and the change in the patterns of world trade, the port and its related industries were badly hit. Instead of new industries being introduced, especially in the past eight years, there has been a further deindustrialisation of the area. Unemployment, poverty and allied problems have grown.

Liverpool has some of the worst levels of unemployment in the country. We have the highest number of people receiving supplementary benefit. Despite what the Liverpool city council has achieved, we still have bad housing and a serious drug problem, and petty crime is on the increase. Those problems occur not only in the inner city but in the entire city.

With regard to unemployment, in April of this year, there were 52,572 claimants resident in the city. About 19,288, 35 per cent., were under 25 years of age, and 20,955, 55 per cent., had been unemployed for over one year. That figure is well above the national average, which is 42 per cent. In February of this year, the average rate of unemployment for the six Liverpool constituencies was 24 per cent., compared with a national average of 12.6 per cent. On 10 February, those receiving supplementary benefit from the 11 offices in the city numbered 138,287. In contrast, in February 1979, the number, although still too high, was 90,550.

In April 1986, although there has been some reduction because of the Liverpool city council's efforts, the housing waiting list was 19,696. One does not need too great an imagination to realise just how serious the problems are. In 1983, the Liverpool city council began to tackle some of the problems. It built 4,900 houses, pulled down slums such as Sir Thomas White gardens in my constituency, built six sports centres, built nursery schools, kept council house rents down—it did not increase them—and also kept down other local authority charges. It did a good job, but it was at a disadvantage because of the cut in rate support and other grants. It began the regeneration of the

city with its hands tied behind its back, but it tried, and its members have suffered for it through surcharges and disqualification from office.

Liverpool needs jobs, new industry and the resuscitation of existing industry where that is possible. Tourism can play a part, but only a minor one, in the redevelopment of our city. The new developments along the line of the old docks can help, but much more is required. The festival gardens were great while they lasted, but they have not produced too many permanent jobs, which are what is required. The maritime museum and the Albert dock complex are very nice, but they cannot begin to be the answer to Liverpool's needs.

The Minister who is to reply recently visited the city and is reported in the Liverpool papers as having said that the way forward is for Liverpool to encourage small local companies to employ local people. I and, I am sure, my colleagues from Liverpool do not oppose that, but I have to tell the Minister that that is only the minor part of the answer. In 1984, more than half of the 45,455 people employed in manufacturing were employed by just seven firms.

The fragility of manufacturing industry is underlined by the City of Liverpool's study of the Liverpool economy which says:

"The de-industrialisation of Liverpool is nowhere more evident than in the City's manufacturing industries. Traditional industries like sugar refining, soap making, ship repairing, marine engineering and rope and twine manufacture have ended or are nearing the end of their long-standing role as sources of employment. Other industries transplanted in the early post-war period—rubber and synthetic fibre manufacturing—have also disappeared to become part of the area's economic history."

We have unemployment and deindustrialisation, and because of that we have low pay on a massive scale. The Low Pay Unit on Merseyside says in a pamphlet:

"A total of a quarter of million Merseysiders—nearly a third of the full-time workforce and three-quarters of part-timers—work for wages that fall below the Council of Europe's minimum threshold for a 'decent' standard of living. Added to the widespread unemployment problem the extent of low pay has left around two-fifths of the Merseyside population living in or on the margins of poverty."

The House should take note of that. The Government must be far more responsive to the needs of our area. When beginning to concern themselves with the inner cities, they should not start by threatening or by-passing the elected local authority. The Government should help the local authority, and back it up by giving assistance and restoring some of the rate support grant—I would say all of the rate support grant—that has been taken away from Liverpool city council.

An editorial in the *Liverpool Daily Post* of 17 June stated:

"It must be very disappointing to new Trade and Industry Secretary Lord Young that the sticking plaster applied by the Government to the gaping wounds of Merseyside have not produced an instant cure.

But how much more disappointing to all those working in the region and for the region to have the rug suddenly pulled from beneath their feet by the man who is supposed to lead their efforts.

The fundamental facts that lie behind Merseyside's decline as a trading, commercial and manufacturing area are historic and geopolitical forces and not some deficiency of its people."

That is absolutely right. So often we hear that if only the workers had not done certain things, there would not have been a decline in the area. That is definitely untrue.

I rarely quote the chairman of the chamber of commerce, but he said of Merseyside development corporation:

"Its success in the docklands is due to the fact that it makes all the planning decisions, it has the right to acquire land and it has no human problems to contend with since all its operations are confined to the redundant part of the waterfront up river from the Pier Head. It is the Chamber's view that a critical factor in the success of the Development Corporation is that there is no human factor in its area of operations. But, were a development corporation to be superimposed on an area where people live, then the problem is likely to become acute and the active co-operation of the local authority essential."

Even the chamber of commerce, which has mainly backed the Government, has made it clear that it wants the local authorities to be properly involved in this matter.

"Housing Policies and the Inner City" issued by the Archdiocese of Liverpool Justice and Peace Commission 1987 states:

"the implicit philosophy which it involves — public investment as the important element — comes up against the government view that the role of the public sector should be reduced. But this will cut off the funds needed to achieve the necessary regeneration. For instance, between 1979 and 1985, the Rate Support Grant for Liverpool was reduced from 62 per cent. to 44 per cent. Agenda for Merseyside has calculated that while in the past six years, government spending in Merseyside has pumped in £200 million."

we keep hearing that more money is being pumped into Liverpool than into any other area —

"with the other hand it has withdrawn a total of £590 million, through reductions in rate support grants etc."

We hear about the aid that has been pumped in, but very little, if anything, has been said by the Government about the money that has been taken out. Everyone understands what the position is.

I have made the point clearly. The first needs of Merseyside and Liverpool are jobs through public investment and private initiatives — we are not arguing against that. The continuing regeneration of the city through Government support to the local authority's housing programme, through co-operative housing — I am not arguing against that — and other public works is required.

Liverpool city council has taken on 1,000 additional workers over four years and 10,000 private-sector workers to man the housing programme. That programme needs to be assisted and further developed. There are one or two other problems. For example, there is the problem of the continuation of the tolls on the Mersey tunnel. Those tolls should be removed and the Government should look carefully at ways of assisting the port of Liverpool with such things as dredging charges, because the port needs help.

My final point is vital. It is about drugs and the need to deal with the environment that creates and encourages the problem. I received a letter yesterday that shook me to the foundation. I had been to see a block of flats and thought that I had managed to get the police, who acted positively, to remove the youngsters with drugs who were occupying the stairs of the block of flats. The police got them out, but God only knows where they went. They may settle somewhere else. I thought that I had managed to solve the problem, but the writer of that letter, a young woman of 25 with two children, said it was as bad as ever. She said:

"If it goes on much longer I cannot see myself continuing. I will have to do away with myself."

That really shook me, but I understand the problem and the terrible frustration of that woman.

I have here a police report from C1 division. It is a depressing report because of the enormous problems that it outlines. In relation to drugs the report says:

"The problem is spread throughout the Sub-Division but there is a preponderance in Croxteth and Norris Green. The times of the offences are recorded throughout the 24 hour period. The problem is exacerbated by the nature of the offence in that minute portions of drugs are exchanged for large amounts of money, plus the physical dependence of addicts leads to great secrecy and self-protection. The problem is so closely linked to a multitude of social problems in the area that no single causal definition is possible."

The next page of the report outlines the problems of increased burglary in the area. The drugs problem, the increase in petty crime and in other forms of crime is related to the high levels of unemployment in the area. Liverpool would like to get rid of those flats and build two-storey houses. We have done that elsewhere, but it requires money and, of course, we are now hearing talk about a community charge. God knows where people in my area will find the money to pay such charges. The Government should help the community and we should not have to listen to this nonsense about a community charge.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): I congratulate my hon. Friend on instigating this important debate. When the Minister visited Liverpool he appeared on Granada Television, and in the *Liverpool Echo* he was reported as saying that he had come to build bridges with the city council. On television he said that more than two thirds of the citizens of Liverpool did not pay any rates. That is an outrageous slur on the people of Liverpool and I hope that when he is winding up the debate he will withdraw that statement and apologise.

Mr. Heffer: I shall listen carefully to the Minister. I have not made many propaganda points. I am concerned about our people in Liverpool and about the conditions under which they have to live. They have awesome problems and need government assistance. The Minister cannot translate what has been done in London along the line of docks, where all sorts of nice houses have been built for yuppies, to an area like ours, where even the yuppies are out of work, never mind the rest of the people. We cannot think in those terms. If it is also suggested that the idea is to build Conservative enclaves in Liverpool to restore the Conservative vote, I say: "Forget it. Don't come up with ideas and prejudices like that." What is required is real assistance.

I am proud of our people in Liverpool. They are the most vibrant, vital and alive people that you could meet. It is interesting to note that if employers approach the work force in Liverpool in a sensible, co-operative manner, the problems are ironed out very quickly. But if they come with a mailed fist, they get a reaction, and that has led to many disputes and arguments in the past.

I am asking the Government to be serious about the matter, because we are serious about it. We are concerned. We want the Government to approach this on the basis of seriousness and co-operation, rather than trying to score cheap political points. We do not have to worry about cheap political points in relation to the Conservative party in Liverpool; that has been settled by the people of Liverpool in the recent vote. Let us get away from the argument on the hustings, and talk seriously about what can be done to begin to solve the problems. Inner-city

[Mr. Heffer]

problems are marginally more difficult than outer-city ones, but both are part of the terrible problems of our city. I want us to start working to solve them sensibly and intelligently.

11.6 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) for the opportunity to discuss the problems of the city of Liverpool. I hope that he will appreciate that I visited the city within days of being appointed to the Department of the Environment with special responsibilities for inner cities. It was appropriate that I should visit Liverpool, for, as the hon. Gentleman knows, I come from the north-west. I was born and brought up in Rochdale, Lancashire. I am also very familiar with Liverpool, although I would not profess to be more familiar with it than the hon. Gentleman. Until I became a Member of Parliament, I visited Liverpool on a weekly basis for the best part of 15 years, and in the past four years, during which I have been privileged to be a Minister in both the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Employment, I have also visited it regularly.

During my visit to Liverpool a week ago, I made it clear that I wished wherever possible to work in partnership. The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the words "partnership" and co-operation" on a number of occasions, and I am grateful to him for the tenor of his speech this evening. My visit received wide publicity—the hon. Gentleman touched on that to a degree—and *The Times* quoted me accurately as saying:

"We are very anxious to work in partnership with the local authorities".

The reply from Liverpool's Councillor Harry Rimmer that same day was:

"We would hope to meet Mr. Trippier as soon as possible to discuss regeneration in the inner city."

I welcome that response. As there is now some hope that we can avoid confrontation and promote co-operation, I am anxious not to dash those hopes this evening in a half-hour debate on the Floor of the House.

I have only a few minutes in which to reply to the debate. However, I want to give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that I am perfectly willing to visit Liverpool again in the near future; indeed, I hope to visit it again and again. I am also happy to see what has been achieved in any area of that city. I shall reserve my judgment about what I consider to be an achievement, but I shall look and I shall listen. I give another undertaking: that I shall always listen, particularly if it will lead to the regeneration of the local economy of the city of Liverpool.

If the hon. Gentleman is willing to approach these matters in the same spirit, as he seems to have suggested this evening, I hope that he will acknowledge that this

Government—as did their predecessor—view the problems of cities such as Liverpool with deep concern. No individual or any collection of individuals has a monopoly of concern about Liverpool.

Changing patterns of world trade, technical innovations, and structural shifts in both manufacturing and service industries have adversely affected the economy and the social fabric of many of the older industrial cities, not only in Britain but in Western Europe and North America. Liverpool is not unique, but I would be the first to acknowledge that its problems are deeper seated and that, rightly, they require the special attention of central Government. Although the hon. Gentleman does not agree with me, I believe that the Government have not should that responsibility. Nobody seriously believes that Liverpool's problems started in 1979 when a Conservative Government were elected. For most of this decade we have focused our attention on a wide range of measures that are aimed at halting the spiral of decline. Our efforts have been concentrated on finding new ways of improving the quality of the physical environment.

In the remaining minute of this debate, I have to try to convince the hon. Gentleman that most of the inner city schemes to which he referred could not have got off the ground had it not been for the assistance of central Government, and in particular for the assistance of the Department in which I now serve. He accurately quoted me in his local newspaper with regard to small firms, but I have to convince him that the days when very large companies set up large subsidiaries in the centre of Liverpool simply because somebody had asked them to do so are gone.

Because of modern technology and higher productivity per man, the large companies are shedding labour rather than increasing it. Therefore, we have to look to the smaller firms to generate new jobs. In my new role I have a significant part to play in helping with the infrastructure that the hon. Gentleman and I know is vital to Liverpool. I hope to talk to him about that on many occasions and to deal in greater detail with some of the matters to which he drew my attention, particularly those that relate to housing. I shall be happy to discuss them, inside or outside the Chamber, on any occasion.

The financial problems that were created by the last Labour council cannot be resolved by me. The problems that the present council now faces were caused by its predecessor, and it cannot expect any special help from this Government. We are more than ready to work with the council if it is willing to work with us, but if it will not work with us we shall not abandon the people—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the Debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.

Adjourned at thirteen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 3 July 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

Tourism

Motion made, and Question proposed. That this House do now adjourn. — [Mr. Garell-Jones.]

9.35 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): As the Minister with special responsibility for tourism, I am delighted that we have the opportunity to debate his vibrant and exciting industry so early in the lifetime of this new Parliament.

In a sense this is my maiden speech on tourism and I should like, at the outset, to pay generous tribute to my friend and colleague, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), who did so much to help and promote the industry when he had the combined brief of small firms and tourism at the Department of Employment. That the two functions have now been split ministerially is an indication of the importance that we in the Department of Employment, and I am sure that I can speak for my tourism colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland when I say the Government as a whole, attribute to the industry. I have been given the separate tourism role with the full backing of the Secretary of State, who is keen and determined to support and promote the industry.

I am delighted that I am joined on the Front Bench today by my hon. Friend the Minister for Employment, and my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Welsh Office who takes a particular interest in tourism in Wales. Tourism is one of our great growth industries, generating substantial national wealth and increasing employment. It has made impressive strides in recent years and I look forward to being its standard bearer.

I intend to focus my efforts in particular on five main areas: the three S's — spotlessness, service and signposting — and training and the needs of disabled people, all of which I will deal with later.

Let me first set the industry in a statistical context. In 1986, 13.8 million people came to the United Kingdom, 60 per cent. from western Europe, 21 per cent. from North America and the rest mainly from the far east and Australasia. Spending by overseas visitors matched 1985's record of £5.4 billion and the outlook for this year remains excellent. Spending by British residents on overnight trips within Britain was 3 per cent. higher than in 1985 and totalled around £7 billion. Those figures do not include day trips to over 1,700 tourist attractions in England, Scotland, and Wales, where close on 130 million visits were recorded. Therefore, total tourist spending from home and overseas was around £15 billion in 1986 — a good 3 per cent. of GDP.

What we have seen over the years is a tremendous response by business, national bodies and local authorities

to the growth of tourism, leisure and business conference opportunities. From an industry that was originally centred on seaside towns, spas, traditional entertainments and museums we now have a richly diversified industry ranging from multi-million pound new hotels, conference centres and all-weather leisure complexes, new and upgraded major attractions, such as Alton Towers, and enduring favourites such as Madame Tussauds and the Tower of London, each receiving over 2 million visitors annually, through to museums, art galleries, National Trust properties, national parks, sports and activity centres down to small family run tourist attractions and farm accommodation and picnic sites.

Tourism can and is making a real contribution to the regeneration of many of our northern towns and cities. Who can fail to be excited by the Albert docks development on the Liverpool waterfront or the unique Wigan pier complex, or Bradford's achievements in putting itself on the tourist map? The G-Mex development in Manchester — arising from the original Manchester Central station — has brought a whole new exhibition industry to that city and in part has encouraged the development of half a dozen new hotels.

In Glasgow, to see the Burrell Collection as I did in a modern setting, with sunlight streaming through the plate glass, is an unforgettable experience — as exciting in its own way as the sporting spectacles of Wimbledon and the Open golf championships. Tourism is predominantly a private sector, entrepreneurial industry that benefits above all from the stable economic climate created by the Government, coupled with increasing consumer spending power.

Government support for the industry has been growing steadily in recent years, with the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board receiving 20 per cent. more in 1986-87, with a further 12 per cent. increase, to £45 million in total, in the current financial year. Taking into account funding to the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland tourist boards, the total grant funding for tourist boards is about £65 million. To that sum can be added some major urban development grants to hotels, support for leisure and recreational facilities and elements of many other programmes.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Given the number of jobs in tourism, does the Minister think that that expenditure of £65 million is adequate when compared with the sums given to manufacturing and other industries?

Mr. Lee: I am sure that tourism would like more Government support, as would many other industries. However, the financial support given by the Government is extremely helpful, though it is dwarfed by the enormous investment of the private sector. Tourism is predominantly a private sector industry and it is doing extremely well.

The present considerable level of funding is used in a number of ways. The British Tourist Authority, which has a budget this year of £20.6 million, plus nearly £13 million from within the industry, aims to increase the number of visits to Britain by 6 per cent. this year. The authority has been paying special attention to the promotion of selected regions of high unemployment where tourism potential exists. Those regions are being particularly promoted in

[Mr. Lee]

North America, Australasia and northern Europe. That is a clear example of our tourism policy objectives resulting in action to help our regions.

London remains our major tourist attraction and the gateway to Britain, but we are determined to encourage overseas visitors to explore and stay in other parts of the country. Travel to those areas is being encouraged by the extension of air networks to regional airports and I am pleased to say that traffic to those airports grew by about 20 per cent. in 1986.

New international routes to regional airports in 1987 include Calgary to Manchester, Sonderborg to Humberside and Hamburg to Birmingham. Manchester, my home airport, is one of the fastest growing airports in Europe and £200 million will be spent on new facilities by the mid-1990s to cater for the expected traffic of 20 million passengers by the year 2000.

Secondly, the national tourist boards use funds for vital promotional work. I am pleased to say that the tourist information centre network has increased to 807 centres, of which 537 are in England.

Another major use of funds by the tourist boards is through the scheme of selective financial assistance under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969. Of course, I can speak with authority only about the English tourist board's scheme, for which my Department provides funding, but the scheme is intended to encourage investment in developments that will do most to improve the range and quality of tourist attractions and accommodation and create more jobs.

I pay tribute to all those who work in a professional or honorary capacity promoting tourism, both nationally and regionally. On Wednesday I attended the annual meeting of our regional tourist board chiefs in Lavenham, where I heard for myself about some matters of concern, but more particularly about the optimism of the industry.

The ETB has just reported that over £1 billion of new projects are under way in the United Kingdom, with 50 major projects having been completed in the six months to June 1987. Projects completed or under way include Centre Parks' £30 million activity-based holiday village in Sherwood forest, the £32 million Hyatt Hotels complex in Birmingham, which has been awarded an urban development grant of £6 million, the £15 million Backbarrow lakeland village timeshare development, the £30 million Gateshead garden festival, the £45 million Kensington-Olympia extension and the £40 million high-tech leisure and hotel complex on three sites at Reading. However, in many areas of the country we are only scratching the surface. The day before yesterday the 46-mile Pendle way in my constituency—a project with £200,000 community programme funding—was officially opened, but we could certainly do more to promote our Pendle witches. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) lives fairly close to Pendle, and I am delighted to see that he is present.

Such investments give a massive boost to our construction industry, which brings me to the subject of employment and job creation through tourism. No fewer than 1.3 million jobs—5 per cent. of total employment—are estimated to be in the leisure, hotel and catering industries most directly serving tourists, and the number has been growing recently by an average of 50,000 jobs per year.

Nationally, there are 14 million jobs in the service sector, compared with 5 million in manufacturing; 77 per cent. of jobs in the United Kingdom are full time, with 23 per cent. being part time. Tourism provides outstanding full-time and part-time opportunities and many people want or need part-time jobs.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. I agree with much of what he has said, but many employees in tourism have to put up with fairly low pay and poor conditions. How do the Government feel about that? I welcome the growth in the number of jobs, but I am worried about the conditions and pay of some employees.

Mr. Lee: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but there are three wages councils in the industry which fix hourly rates, minimum overtime rates and accommodation rates. The basic thrust of the Government's policy is to free the labour market and encourage the creation of jobs. The Government's view, which I share, is that if we adopted the Labour party's proposal of a minimum wage unemployment would increase and there would be substantial job losses.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way at an early stage in his important speech. I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) could catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and give any justification for his great slur on the industry. We keep hearing from the Opposition allegations about wages and conditions, but there is an inspectorate for the industry and when such allegations have been made in the press and elsewhere they have not been substantiated. I look forward to hearing the hon. Member for Burnley trying to justify an unjustified slur on an important industry.

Mr. Lee: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention, which puts some balance into the comments of the hon. Member for Burnley, but perhaps the hon. Member will have an opportunity to develop his case during the debate.

We reject any suggestion, from whatever quarter, that tourism can provide only Mickey Mouse or candy floss jobs. The industry provides a wide range of job opportunities for men and women at all levels of skill and qualifications. However, there are problems that need to be tackled, such as skill shortages and recruitment difficulties—notably in London—and overcoming the image problem which still seems to exist in the eyes of some young people. That is why my Department, along with the Manpower Services Commission and the Department of Education and Science, has been working closely with the industry to ensure the steady improvement of careers advice and vocational, education and training provision.

The responsibility for those matters must rest with the industry, but here, perhaps more than elsewhere, the Government, and not least the Department of Employment, can offer vital support by making sure that our training and education programmes focus on the needs of the industry. I shall be looking at that area as an early priority.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, because he has mentioned one of the most important subjects to which the tourism industry must address itself. There must be a review of the

numbers and types of courses offered to students in higher education establishments, and we must ensure that there is a far greater emphasis on the quality and range of courses to provide the training that the industry needs.

Mr. Lee: I am grateful for that intervention. Perhaps my hon. Friend will have the opportunity to develop that theme during the debate.

I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is present. It demonstrates his early commitment to tourism and the hotel and catering industries. As he said in his statement on Tuesday, there is good news for employers in job-creating areas such as tourism. His statement took forward our manifesto proposals which are to form the programme of the Department of Employment in the first Session of this Parliament. Right at the forefront is to be a new style of Manpower Services Commission to run the nation's training programmes. The new commission will be bigger, it will have more employer representatives, and these employers will be drawn from some of the new, growing, sectors of employment which are not currently represented on the commission.

I have in mind small businesses, new technology, distribution, finance, and, of course, the tourism and leisure industries. The increase in employer representation for those industries will be extended to the area manpower boards, too. We want to make sure that none of our growth industries are held back by not being able to attract the right people with the right skills at the right time.

I return now to my earlier themes—the three S's: spotlessness, service and signposting. First, I want a spotless Britain. Here standards have improved dramatically, but not enough. We still see too much litter around our streets—too many tables are left uncleared for too long, and we still find some smaller pubs, catering establishments, petrol stations and public places without hot water in toilets and with one small unhygienic towel hanging on the wall—if that. I intend to be the scourge of the unhygienic and the uncaring and I shall not hesitate to admonish, both in private and in public. I repeat that I want a spotless Britain, and see my campaign as complementary to "Keep Britain Tidy" and "UK 2000". Perhaps it will be possible to encourage improved standards by some award to places of excellence.

Secondly, as a nation we have never fully regarded the giving of service with as much pride as happens in overseas countries. As I have said, jobs in tourism and leisure are not inferior jobs—they are just as worthy and necessary as those in other areas of the economy—and pride in giving good service is crucial in producing satisfied customers. We are making conscious efforts to improve the quality of the service offered to visitors by the tourism industry.

An area in which the tourist boards are playing a leading role in promoting higher standards within the industry is the hotel classification scheme. Some 9,800 establishments are now within the scheme in England, with almost 3,000 in Scotland and 2,500 in Wales. The basic scheme is working well and has firm acceptance within the industry. The House will know that the "Crown" scheme is solely a classification system, which is governed by the adherence to strict criteria laid down by the respective national tourist boards. Discussions on the criteria are currently proceeding and improvements here should help raise the level of applications with even greater support

from the industry. From discussions with all interested parties, it is apparent that there are certain sectors within the industry that are in favour of the introduction of an element of qualitative assessment. Scotland already operates such a scheme. I understand that the ETB is currently considering the desirability of such a scheme in England and I hope that that question is soon resolved to the satisfaction of all.

Thirdly, there is signposting. Brown and white tourist signs are springing up around the country following last year's initiative, allowing highway authorities to signpost major attractions in this distinctive way. Signposts off motorways, trunk roads, and the country's many other roads have so far been approved for nearly 2,000 attractions, and, once erected, will be a major step towards making our many tourist attractions visible and accessible. But there is still a great deal to do to ensure that the tourist industry gains quickly the maximum benefit from this welcome development, and I am in close touch with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport on this matter.

This Government, throughout their term of office, have been trying to reduce burdens on business and cut red tape. Our intention to liberalise licensing laws further, as indicated in the Gracious Speech, has been warmly welcomed by the industry. The British Tourist Authority has estimated that liberalisation could create upwards of 50,000 jobs.

Our small firms service and regional tourist boards are helping many with start-up and expansion schemes, and I was pleased to launch and give my support on Wednesday to the joint initiative by the East Anglia tourist board and small firms service in providing a combined service from their local tourist industry.

Within the Department of Employment I have special responsibility for the employment of disabled people. What I want to ensure is that employers in tourism and leisure do everything possible to take on those with disabilities—many of whom can, and do perform a thoroughly good job. There are already good stories to tell. One can find excellent lunches prepared in the restaurant "Dr B's Kitchen" in Harrogate. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) has eaten there: if not, he should. It is a YTS scheme for young people with special needs, offering them a training and experience in this growth area.

There are many employers in the industry who can be congratulated on their positive attitudes. Last year the Manpower Services Commission honoured the George hotel at Crawley with a fit for work award. The management there had recognised the value of its disabled employees and had altered floor levels for easier access and installed a computerised switchboard, which enables its blind telephonists to receive instructions through their headphones.

I also want to ensure that the disabled visitor is not disadvantaged through access and mobility difficulties. Many of our better tourist attractions cater for those with disabilities, but others could do much more. I am pleased to say that under the tourism and community programme national initiative, Holiday Care Service is carrying out a survey of tourist accommodation to assess its suitability for disabled people.

Many years ago the Hungarian author and critic George Mikes wrote that, on the continent, people have good food, but in England they have good table manners.

[Mr. Lee]

These days I like to think that we have both. We can all be proud of what our tourist industry has achieved, and the outlook is set fair. The Government and my Department will continue to play a constructive and supportive role, and I pledge my energies to promoting the industry's continuing growth and prosperity.

9.57 am

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): We welcome this early opportunity for a debate on this important industry. May I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) on taking over from my old opponent, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), who has moved on to new pastures. While welcoming him to the role, I hope that he will not be as complacent as certain aspects of his remarks this morning seemed to foretell that he might be about the wonderful state of the British tourist industry.

I hope, in my few minutes at the Dispatch Box, that I can alert the hon. Gentleman to some of the problems that are emerging in the developing tourist industry. There is no doubt that it is an important industry. Looking at even the broader figures about related employment, we know that two million people are employed in enabling activities in the industry and nearly one in 10 of those in work—as estimated by the Institute of Manpower Studies—were working in related industries in 1985. That was a rise of 300,000 in the period which the IMS examined.

The tourist industry is a challenge and opportunity and the same rules apply to it as those that apply to any other industry. If one creates wealth in Britain, we know only too well that that one has to meet the challenges of international competition and markets, and use the latest technology and methods. That is true of every industry. It is also true of the tourist industry and we are in the international, competitive market because people have a choice. Our own people have the choice of going abroad or staying at home, and foreign visitors have the choice—very quickly, as we know, in certain circumstances—of switching to other destinations. So we must be competitive.

However, on a note of realism, my hon. Friends and I sometimes worry when the Government talk of tourism in such strong terms. Sometimes we think that they do so because tourism is something of figleaf covering the policies of that have failed in other countries. Every time an hon. Member talks about manufacturing industry and the dreadful decline and collapse of industrial jobs during questions in the House on employment, a Minister asks, "What about tourism?" The tourism industry is important; it is a vital industry and it has an increasing role to play, but it no substitute for manufacturing industry or jobs. The two should go together. The visitor to Britain buys an enormous amount of British goods and would like to buy more. When the Minister is going round with his scrubbing brush and clean towel, I hope that he will not only inspect the lavatories in our tourist attractions but the goods for sale in the tourist shops. He should wander down Oxford street to see what is on offer to the visitor to Britain. Too many of the goods on offer are not quality British products but are imports from Taiwan and other places, because many of the industries in which we were

predominant and had a proud reputation have disappeared under this Government, or are as weak as they have ever been.

There are some exceptions. Huddersfield still produces fine worsted products which the visitor to Britain wants to buy, and up to 40 per cent. of the ceramics and china produced in the Potteries is sold to overseas visitors.

We must have a Government who care about regenerating British industry as well as a Government who believe that tourism is important. We cannot close our eyes to the disaster that the Government have been for most manufacturing industry and employment. We need a Government who believe not only in tourism but in manufacturing.

I go further and say that we need a Government who take seriously the proper development of tourism. This morning, the Minister said that the free market will always deliver the goods. We have heard that often, and the Government rejected even the modest proposals made about a year ago by the Select Committee for Trade and Industry, when it still had responsibility for the subject, and which we debated about six to eight months ago. The Government have contributed little to the growth of tourism, although they are proud to point to the success of the industry. It has grown largely on its own, and any help that it has received came from previous Labour Administrations. Much of the hotel expansion in the 1960s and 1970s came because of Labour Government policy. Tourism has also been helped by Labour-controlled local authorities. Even in the hostile climate generated by the Government, many local authorities have striven to develop tourism and especially the tourism infrastructure. I hope that the Government will get one thing right: tourism will not always grow on its own; it needs a public-private partnership.

A good example of public-private partnership is Britain's waterways. Our inland waterways have an enormous potential as leisure and tourism attractions. Many of us have wonderful inland waterways in our constituencies, some of which have been developed. Wigan pier and other attractions have great potential, but they will not be developed only by private enterprise. They will be developed by a partnership between the public and the private sectors. The private sector will never bring back to life great stretches of the canal system, but once that is done by a progressive local authority, the private sector can come into play and restaurants and other leisure facilities will grow up alongside our canals.

The private-public relationship has been severely damaged, first, because the Government have put very little real money into tourism and, secondly, because the Government have hampered local authorities from doing the same job. One local authority that tried to do that was Brighton. I hope that the Minister will visit Brighton; perhaps he does so during Conservative party conferences. The Labour council in Brighton has been trying to help tourism there, and the town's greatest attractions and facilities are owned by the local authority. The Royal Pavilion is a classic example. It is one of the finest attractions in the country. When someone threw a bomb into the Royal Pavilion and caused a small amount of damage, it opened up the fabric to inspection and the council discovered that, with dry rot, wet rot and all the other defects that appear in old buildings, the Royal

Pavilion needed £10 million worth of repairs. The dome next door to the Royal Pavilion needs £11 million spent on it.

To stay on the national conference circuit and to compete with other resorts, Brighton had to invest in a national conference centre again provided by the public. There are hardly any privately built national conference centres in Britain because, on their own, they do not make money. But they are essential in a booming tourist and conference centre circuit. The Minister will know that the Government wanted a private developer to build the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre across the road from here, but no one was interested. It had to be developed by the Property Services Agency and the Government.

Because the local authority in Brighton built a national conference centre and had to repair the fabric of the Royal Pavilion, it was rate-capped. It cannot carry out important repairs needed on its other buildings because it has been rate-capped. It is bizarre to rate-cap a Labour authority which has tried to do something about high unemployment. Many of us who represent northern constituencies may think that Brighton has little unemployment, but it is running there at about 12 to 13 per cent. The Government must allow local authorities to invest in tourism. They must show some realism towards the public-private relationship.

Tourism is an important industry that must be nurtured by the Government, but it is no panacea. The Minister went through his three S's; I shall go through the five-point plan which a Labour Government would introduce. The first objective should be to support the growth of the industry and to help it to diversify and enhance regional appeal. Local authorities must be liberated so that they can play their part. If that does not happen, many of the things of which the Minister boasted—the Bradford initiative and developments such as Wigan pier—will not be repeated, because they are based on the ability of democratically elected local authorities to lead the way in participation with the private sector.

I urge the Minister to understand that, in terms of tourism development, like York, London is an overfished water. If we want to diversify the appeal of areas which, traditionally, have been less known as destinations for tourists, let us put tourism in the broadest context. When we talk about the tourism industry, many people think of American visitors or visitors from other countries. It is most important that we aim our market at our own people as well.

One of the most interesting suggestions to come out of the investigation by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry into tourism was that we should try to extend the season. We suffer from appalling weather. This June has brought home to all of us what sort of weather we can expect in a pretty average summer. The Select Committee recommends changing the rules to extend the season, and giving grants to the proprietors of the great tourist attractions to extend their season. The Government should reconsider giving a subsidy in that direction. That was one of the most enlightened suggestions in the Committee's report. That Committee had a majority of members of the Minister's own party. As a new Minister, he should look at those recommendations again.

The second area that an enlightened Government would look at is helping to build an expanded, stable, well-trained and well-paid work force in the industry. The hon.

Member for York (Mr. Gregory) said that it was a slur on the industry and employers to dare to suggest that there was low pay and exploitative employment in the tourist industry. I ask hon. Members to be a little honest about the reality of the industry. Of course, I and most Opposition Members do not subscribe to the belief that it is generally a low-paid, exploitative industry, but an important sector is still exploitative.

Most jobs in tourism are well-paid, permanent and good. We can agree on that across the party lines. But there is a significant percentage of exploited workers. For example, women in the hotel and catering industry are exploited. If the hon. Member for York thinks that that is a slur, I should like to direct him to the study by the Institute of Manpower Studies, commissioned by the British Tourist Authority, which makes that very point, that there is low pay and exploited labour in his industry.

Mr. Gregory: What percentage?

Mr. Sheerman: For example, only one third of the jobs for women in the catering industry are full-time—33 per cent, exactly, according to the IMS study.

It is always important to quote briefings to hon. Members from the House of Commons Library. A briefing that is available to Members clearly states:

"Most of what is written on tourism is very favourable but there is another side to it. Workers in industries related to tourism are notoriously badly paid, particularly in catering and hotels."

A table from "Low Wages and Poverty in the 1980s" in the *Low Pay Review* points out that 27 per cent of those classified as low paid are in this very industry. The briefing continues:

"Around a quarter of low paid workers are in the category 'distribution, hotel, catering . . .'. Another table from a more recent report 'The Price of Low Pay—Deepening Poverty', *Low Pay Review* . . . shows catering workers as among the very worst paid group in the country".

If the hon. Member for York thinks that that is a slur by politically motivated politicians, with great respect, I say that the IMS study, the British Tourist Authority and the House of Commons Library do not fall into that category.

Mr. Gregory: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sheerman: I shall not give way. Let me finish my point, then I shall let the lucky hon. Member for York intervene—he is lucky to be here.

The House of Commons Library report also states:

"Working conditions are also often very poor, particularly in catering where workers work long, unsociable hours frequently in very hot conditions. It is common for them to have to work at lunchtime, then to take an afternoon break and return to work in the evening until after midnight. That is the split shift system."

What have the Government done about exploitation?

The part-time worker, the woman worker and the young worker are most exploited. The Minister talked about the three wages councils that cover that area. Young people do not get protection from wages councils because of the Government's action. They are in one of the most exploited sectors in the country. I urge the Minister to look at the way in which many young people in the catering industry are now being exploited, with long hours, extremely low pay and little prospect of a future that looks as if it goes anywhere. In other words, they are low-paid, dead-end jobs. It does this country and the tourism industry no good to have within it low-paid workers with no hope for improvement.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that generally young workers are paid considerably more than those in many other European countries? My constituency has much hotel and catering employment, as the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, and it is not my experience that there is no future for young workers. Indeed, most of the people in my constituency who are managers and are in relatively high executive positions started on low wages.

Mr. Sheerman: I am sorry, but the research that I have seen, which is freely available, shows that that is not the case. The fact is that a large percentage of young people in the industry are still offered no training at all. Many young people will put up with low wages. Perhaps we would be more complacent about low wages if a low wage for a temporary period was combined with training that led to a better position and a better career. I urge the Minister to tell his colleague the Secretary of State that one thing that he could do is return to the view that young people should never be employed unless they are guaranteed training.

It is a scandal that in Britain in 1987 young people are allowed to go into work at 16 and 17 without a guarantee of training. The Government have offered subsidies under the young workers scheme. A handsome subsidy is given to employers, many of whom are in the tourist industry, and the only criterion is that the young workers be paid below a certain minimum wage. Would it be too much to expect that at the same time as a subsidy is received from Her Majesty's Government, the price should be that young people are trained properly for a good future in that career?

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for letting me have the opportunity to respond to a couple of the points that he has made. Can he offer the House any independent evidence whatsoever about the allegations that he has made? He talked about part-time working. There is a great deal of part-time working here and in other successful economies, particularly the United States of America. It does not mean to say that the work is not well paid and that there is not training. I urge the hon. Gentleman to have an early meeting with the hotel and catering training board. If he takes his Opposition portfolio seriously, he would meet the chief executive and representatives of the great number of unions on that board, who would put him right and tell him that it is an excellent training board, which gives training to young people who are our seed corn for the future. We need to encourage them and they should not be denigrated by the Opposition.

Mr. Sheerman: No one denigrates the efforts of an industrial training board that does the best that it can within the constraints of its finance and its levy. However, the training contribution of £13 million is small. It should be at a very much higher level and training should include a much larger sector of the industry. As in many other industries, the tourist industry has a few very good employers who take training seriously and pay proper wages. However, far too many escape the net of training. Any hon. Member can find example after example in his own constituency of young people being exploited on low pay and without training.

I shall now move to my third point. The third aim of Government should be to encourage effective standards of

service and consumer protection. I am glad that the Minister intends to be Mr. Spotless or Mr. Clean. Even the hon. Member for York will agree with the recommendations of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry about classification. He spoke about a voluntary scheme. The Select Committee strongly recommended that if we are to take standards properly, a compulsory scheme should apply to all hotels so that people will know when they go into a hotel precisely what they are being offered. The hon. Gentleman knows that at the moment there is a resistance to a voluntary scheme by quite significant sectors of the industry. If they do not fall into line very quickly the Minister should do something about it. A compulsory classification for hotels should be introduced.

The fourth aim for an enlightened Government should be to encourage tourism and leisure opportunities for all our people. We can be very complacent about this but the British Tourist Association estimates that only 60 per cent. of our people have a holiday of any kind. That was measured against a criterion of more than two nights away from home in a year. That means that 40 per cent. of our people cannot afford a holiday. If the Minister is serious about his responsibilities for the handicapped, the disadvantaged and the disabled he should look closely at making sure that the disabled, who form a significant part of the 40 per cent. of people who do not get a holiday, do get one.

One of the reasons why people do not get holidays is that too many people are on low pay. The Minister can sneer at Labour party plans to introduce a national minimum wage, but that is one of the things that we shall continue to fight for in this Parliament. We shall continue to fight against the low pay and poor conditions of work suffered by people who cannot afford a decent holiday. Surely some day the Conservative Government will waken up to the fact that Britain wants highly paid workers with decent standards that will give them the ability to go on holiday and to live a decent life. High pay and good conditions generate good tourism, a good industry and a good society. We ought to move towards those things.

My fifth and final point is that we should aim to co-ordinate the efforts and activities of all those people involved in the development of tourism. I come back to the point that that must be done by way of a public-private partnership. Local authorities must be given the ability to participate. In the last eight years they have been given a declining opportunity to participate by this Government. We shall not get the interesting developments and the expansion of tourism to different parts of Britain without that liberation.

The Conservative Government did great damage to the development of that relationship and to the development of tourism by abolishing the Greater London council and the six metropolitan councils. The hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) laughs. If he goes to the London tourist board he will be told that there is a very real problem now that there is no democratically elected body for London to plan the future of the London tourist enterprise. The Minister is interested in London and also in planning and would like to be Mr. Spotless. If he travelled on the London underground, he would find that it has been progressively stripped of people, of workers.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): There are now more passengers.

Mr. Sheerman: Automation increases efficiency and cuts the number of jobs, but the London underground is on a cycle of decline.

Mr. Hughes: Nonsense.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman should stand on the platform at Westminster tube station and count how many trains are not covered in graffiti. He should find out how many visitors now say that they are frightened to travel on the London tube at night because of the fear of violence and crime. That is a cycle of decline that could take the London underground and London Transport to the level of the New York subway and that would be a dreadful blow to this country and to tourism in London.

Just this week, the London tourist board launched a plan for tourism in London. It knows that a central concern is that London is becoming a forbidden city for many of the people that we represent. To people in Bradford, Huddersfield and in the Minister's own constituency London is a forbidden city because it is expensive to come and stay in London. It may have three, four and five-star hotels but many of my constituents and many other people in Britain want cheap accommodation.

What has happened to most of the low-cost budget hotels in London? They are filled with homeless people and the London tourist board says that as a priority the Government should do something about that. The tourist board does not give an answer to the question of what to do with those people but the Opposition know that they have to be properly housed. They should be put into decent housing and that means allowing local authorities to build houses and other accommodation for the people who so desperately need it. If the Government do not build those houses they will not solve that problem.

Our capital city has a crisis in terms of hotel accommodation and it is getting worse every day. The London tourist board says that within three years there will be an even greater crisis and it predicts a 20,000 bedroom shortage by the early 1990s. The beginning of that crisis is already with us. Many of our people cannot afford to come to London because the accommodation at the lower end of the market is not available. That is a scandal, it needs public participation and leadership, and the Government should do something about it. If they do not, the crisis will not be solved by private enterprise. The Government must solve it by showing some leadership.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman started the latter part of his peroration by praising the record of the Greater London council under the control of his party. Will he tell the House why the Labour-controlled GLC at the shortest possible notice completely withdrew its grant to the London tourist board, promising to replace it by a tourism strategy with money behind it? Up to the day on which it was abolished the GLC did not spend a penny on that tourism strategy. That forced the unions representing the workers in the London tourist board to come to me as the GLC opposition spokesman. They asked me to try to intercede with the hard-faced men running the so-called GLC tourism strategy, but they did nothing to help those workers. The London tourist board could have gone under if it had had to rely solely on the GLC for help. Can the hon. Gentleman explain those actions by his GLC friends?

Mr. Sheerman: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the constraints and pressures on the GLC at that time made

it impossible for the GLC to fund many of the operations that it wanted to support. The abolition of the metropolitan councils and the GLC made tourist development far more difficult.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): My hon. Friend has rightly pointed to the importance of transport in the promotion of tourism. Is not British Rail's recent decision to impose a substantial increase in fares on InterCity routes to deal with overcrowding a difficult policy to reconcile with the promotion of tourism? Rather than imposing much higher fares, would it not have been more sensible of British Rail to make substantial investment in the expansion of its system and the improvement of the services offered to tourists and others?

Mr. Sheerman: My hon. Friend is right. The increased fares, added to the high cost of accommodation in London, makes the prospect of visiting our capital increasingly remote for those on lower incomes.

I have spoken for too long, but I have a couple more points to make. We need a Government who will act and lead in a tourism strategy. We have pointed out, month after month, year after year, the emerging crisis in the tourist industry which will need action from Government to prevent.

Tourism must be seen by the community as beneficial. I urge the Minister to take seriously not just his spotlessness, services and signposting—the three Ss. We in the Labour party recently produced an amazingly succinct document, called "Quality, Community and Commitment". One of the themes running through that is the importance of making tourism a community-based as well as a visitors-based facility. Many of the facilities for the leisure and relaxation of our people can be combined with those for the overseas visitor.

We need to ensure that when resources are developed, often on a public-private partnership basis, those facilities are available to the community and are seen to be valuable to the community. There are signs in the inner London tourist analysis that people are getting tired of tourism. We have to make sure that local communities see the positive benefit of tourism, not only in jobs but in the facilities available for them. The Opposition believe in tourism, but the Government do not.

10.33 am

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I am proud and privileged to have been elected to represent the people of Ryedale, my local constituency. My immediate predecessor, Mrs. Elizabeth Shields, worked tirelessly for her constituents during her year at Westminster, which I know that she much enjoyed. I trust that she will not mind if I say that my victory in the recent election was all the more satisfying and pleasing for having not only restored Conservative representation for Ryedale at Westminster, but achieved such a convincing majority.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House will forgive me, I am sure, if I also pay tribute to my good friend the late John Spence, whose sudden death in March last year shocked and saddened so many of us. He is still much missed by his many friends both in Ryedale and here at Westminster. John's widow, Hester, is well and in excellent spirits and has been a great help to me and my wife especially during my candidature.

As soon as I saw that tourism was to be the subject of today's debate, I decided that this would be the ideal

[Mr. John Greenway]

opportunity to make my maiden speech, and I am most grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to do so. Ryedale, the heart of north Yorkshire, can justifiably claim to be one of the finest and most beautiful constituencies in our green and pleasant land: I know just how fortunate I am to be its Member of Parliament.

Tourism is inextricably linked with Ryedale's past, present and future. In Edwardian times, Filey, the princess of Yorkshire's seaside resorts, was a much favoured and popular holiday centre. Filey's Edwardian heritage remains; its fine buildings are well preserved and its past is brought back to life in an annual Edwardian festival. The seventh such festival has been taking place throughout this week.

Charles Dickens was a frequent visitor to the town of Malton. It is said that Ryedale buildings and characters figure largely in some of the best loved novels. Malton and its neighbouring town, Norton, commemorate Dickens's earlier visits with a Dickens festival at Christmas.

Wordsworth was also a regular traveller through Ryedale. With apologies to hon. Members from the Lake District I point out that a suggestion was made recently that perhaps the famous daffodils of Farndale in the north Yorks moors national park could have helped to inspire his best known poem. It is a suggestion that is as impossible to prove as to disprove, but its value in drawing attention to what Farndale has to offer has been well worth the controversy.

George Hudson, the railway king much famed in York, was born in Ryedale. The steam trains that pull holiday makers to the seaside resorts still run today on the north Yorkshire moors railway. Did you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you can dine in a Pullman, in the grand old style, behind a steam engine? However, that is only if you come to the Ryedale festival later this month, which is, dare I say, during the Recess.

Who else came to Ryedale in the past? In the 18th and 19th centuries some of Ryedale's famous country houses, such as Castle Howard and Beningbrough hall, played host to many society guests. Today, they rightly attract visitors from all over the world, and no doubt their promotion has been much helped by the recent television programme "Brideshead Revisited".

The many abbeys and monasteries such as Rievaulx, Byland and Kirkham would have attracted a different kind of tourist — those seeking rest, calm and tranquillity. Today, their imposing ruins offer the visitor a new stillness and peace, away from the noise of town and traffic.

William the Conqueror, the Vikings and, earlier still, the Romans all came to Ryedale, and although the manner of their visits was somewhat forceful, and not to be recommended to present day tourists, they have all left their mark. Malton museum now houses a fine Roman collection. Many of the villages of Ryedale, especially in the wolds, were originally Viking settlements, and the Normans left behind a great architectural heritage of churches and castles. Wartime visitors of a different kind, Italian prisoners, were housed in a camp at Malton. The camp has now been restored and houses a unique wartime museum. The whole project was funded by private enterprise.

In every one of these areas, tourism in Ryedale is taking advantage of its history. Nostalgia is big business for tourism. If used with skill, care and imagination, it can create a whole new industry for almost any town or village, not just in Ryedale but throughout Britain. Have you ever heard of Merrills, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Merrills is a board game much popularised in the last century and people will be playing it again in Ryedale this year.

Having achieved a degree of success in tourism, what of the future? First, we must recognise that local residents are understandably concerned and anxious that their villages or communities should not be overrun by coachloads of tourists. I was pleased to note that there is at least some unanimity across the House on that point. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) referred to that, and I agree with him. The problem must be handled with extreme sensitivity and much more must be done by the tourist industry to educate and win the co-operation of local communities.

Ryedale district council is pioneering village tourism through its Ryedale quest programme the aim of which is to attract the discerning visitor who also wants a quiet life and who is prepared to spend his money in the local village pub, inn, restaurant, shop or bed-and-breakfast accommodation. His visit may make all the difference to local amenities remaining open and viable which then directly benefits those who live in the area. The clear objective must be to achieve a balance, tourism in equilibrium, so that the locals are enthusiastic and not resentful and tourists and residents share a common interest of amenity, heritage, convenience and environmental protection.

Tourism can also dispel the myth that society's divisions lie only between north and south. It helps the north not one jot constantly to harp on about a north-south divide in the terms that we have heard recently. Through tourism lies not only the potential to create wealth in the north, but the opportunity to invite people to come to the north and see for themselves just what we have to offer in Yorkshire and elsewhere.

Is it not ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the very things that the young, well-paid executives in the south-east find so fashionable are available in such abundance in Yorkshire and Ryedale? Good food, real ale in charming pubs and inns, cricket on the village green, stately homes, history and nostalgia everywhere, the best clothing and antique shops at prices not seen in London for decades and all surrounded by fresh clear air and stunning scenery. What more could anyone ask? We must not put people off coming north and to Ryedale by talk of decay, depression and discontentment.

What of visitors from overseas? During the election campaign my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) came to Helmsley. We held an impromptu debate in the market square. One man, a visitor from one of our bigger Yorkshire towns, strongly attacked the Government's policy towards overseas investment. A few moments later a Canadian approached us and said, "I don't know what that fool was complaining about. Doesn't he realise that Britain just about owns half of Canada?"

I believe that the growing resurgence in Britain's influence and standing overseas can and does provide a great stimulus to United Kingdom tourism. We must continue to take every advantage of that, not by exploitation and poor standards of service and comfort, but by offering our foreign guests value for money through

personal service, holidays of quality and imagination, individual attention and the warmest of welcomes. Americans are giving holidays in Britain, incorporating visits to my constituency, as incentive prizes to salesmen and executives.

We must not make the mistake of dealing with tourism in isolation from other issues. I want briefly to mention two or three of those issues. Continuing and substantial reductions in personal taxation are a major boost to tourism putting more money in people's pockets to spend as they choose. Some, indeed many, are choosing to spend more on their leisure. Improving facilities for leisure and sport is a vital adjunct to the tourism industry. In this area extra help from the Government should be explored along with an increase in partnership schemes between local authorities and the private sector such as we are now planning to adopt in Ryedale. Tourism can help to sustain the rural economy, providing opportunities for farmers to diversify into non-agricultural projects. However, we should be very careful not to presume that all farmers should be expected to join in tourism projects. For the farmer, agriculture will remain the main source of income. At the same time, more could be done to create leisure amenities for visitors and local residents in our rural areas and an example of that is the fine leisure centre created by the Forestry Commission in Dalby forest.

Transport policy also greatly affects tourism. Many visitors to the regions are now taking advantage of the lower coach fares resulting from deregulation and the more competitive attitude that has resulted at British Rail. We must also look to further improvements in our road network. The by-passes at Tadcaster, York and Malton built during the last decade have greatly benefited access to Ryedale. However, other by-pass schemes particularly at Easingwold, are now a priority.

Improved signposting from those major roads is also much needed in Ryedale, not only to the facilities offered in towns and villages that are otherwise passed by, but to important local attractions such as the Flamingoland country park in the vale of Pickering. Flamingoland now attracts more than 1 million visitors a year and employs a workforce of 300—four times as many as in 1979. They do considerably more than sell ice creams and sweets. I was very pleased to note the priority that my hon. Friend the Minister will give to that issue. I also share the congratulations given to him on his appointment.

The promotion of tourism by prominent local people in public life can be immeasurably beneficial to an area's tourist industry. I hope that in this maiden speech I have shown that I will do everything that I can towards that objective. I very much look forward to promoting Ryedale's interests in other areas in the House in the months and years to come.

10.46 am

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for granting me the opportunity to address the House for the first time. My constituency of Leicester, East was held by the Labour party from 1945 to 1983. Despite the considerable efforts of my predecessor as candidate, Miss Patricia Hewitt, a Conservative Member was returned in 1983. However, after that brief experiment, on 11 June it returned to Labour with one of the largest swings in the country. In fact, the day after the

election, the *Leicester Mercury*—the popular and influential local paper—referred to the city as "Red Leicester", as the whole city voted Labour.

It is a tradition of the House for me to mention my predecessor. It is right for me to say that Mr. Peter Bruinvels, in his own way, made his mark on the House. I understand from the police here that he has left a crossbow and six bolts. I am sure that when he retrieves them he will shoot them in many directions. I wish him well in his chosen career.

Leicester became a city in 1919. In the seven decades since it has become a centre for tourism in the midlands. It is an historic city, with an impressive tradition, and it lies modestly in the centre of England. It boasts a university and a polytechnic, many shopping centres and great roads, such as the Belgrave road and Uppingham road. However, local residents and I will be opposing further extensions of the A46-47 link road.

Leicester has become the focal point for many world religions. In 1926 Saint Martin's church became a cathedral. More recently, Leicester has acquired the Shree Sanatan Mandir, the largest Hindu temple in Europe, the Jam E-mosque in Ashfordby street, two Sikh Gurdwaras in East Park road and Meynal road, and many other places of worship, including Saint Joseph's church on Uppingham road, where I worship. Its religious toleration should be the envy of Britain.

It is possible for the tourist and visitor to Leicester to be greeted in many of the local dialects—"Waheguru ji ka Khalsa"; "Wahéguru ji ka Fateh"; "Namaste"; "A Salaam O Alikum", "Kemchho" or the more popular "Hello, me duck."

There are nine local electoral wards in Leicester, East. There are the great housing estates in the middle and outer city areas. These are Northfields, Morton and Tailby in west Humberstone, Rowletts Hill in Coleman, Netherhall in Humberstone, and Thurnby Lodge and Goodwood in Evington. There are the wards of Abbey Rise and St. Marks in the inner city. The wards of Rushey Mead, Latimer, Belgrave and Charnwood comprise the inner city area.

Leicester is a city of immense differences, yet it is a community that is united and fiercely protective of its local heritage. Leicester used to be one of the most prosperous cities in Europe and it still retains a variety of industries. These include hosiery and knitwear, footwear, plastics and light engineering. It is the home of the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers. There is a host of firms employing hundreds of workers, and some of these firms are household names. For example, there are Thorn EMI and Corahs-Walkers.

Leicester used to be one of the most prosperous cities in Europe, but, alas, that is no longer the position. The past eight years have taken a heavy toll. Before my entry into Parliament I worked as a community lawyer with the North Leicester advice centre. It is one of two law centres that is funded by the Labour-controlled city council. It is a local recognition of the principle of public legal services, a principle which I intend to raise on future occasions.

At the law centre I came to know a different Leicester: a Leicester that will not be found in the tourist guide. It is a Leicester in which people are pushed to the margins of society. There are 10,079 people on the housing waiting list. There are 21,000 dwellings that need rewiring, and a similar number are suffering from rising damp. There are 15,000 dwellings that have no inside lavatories and 11,000

[Mr. Keith Vaz]

lack a washhand basin with hot water. Those in Smith houses know only too well what it is like to live in houses that are in need of major repair. Yet the Government have mercilessly cut housing investment moneys for Leicester city council. There has been a reduction of £27,698,000 in real terms since 1979. This condemns thousands of local people to houses that are damp and unfit for habitation. Children are enslaved from birth into conditions of social deprivation. Leicester city council needs £57 million next year for its housing investment programme.

The law centre brought me into contact with some of the 16,000 pensioners who live in Leicester, East who cannot survive on the pittance that they are given and whose consolation and comfort is the work of organisations such as Age Concern and Help the Aged. There are courageous mothers who are trying to set up mother-toddler groups in neighbourhood centres in Coleman, Netherhall and Belgrave. They are doing so without any support and are creating a jumble-sale start for pre-school nursery education, when that should be a right.

I am talking of the Leicester in which 1,146 people have been on the waiting list for operations for more than a year, the Leicester which sees so many families suffering misery and hardship as a result of the implementation of the immigration rules. Husbands and wives, and mothers and children, are divided. I have in mind a mother who came to Britain in September 1986 on a visit, fell in love and married a British citizen. She has been told today to leave the country and abandon her four-week old child. That is happening when we have a Government in office who claim to believe in family values. It is a disgrace.

In my constituency, 5,100 people are out of work. I am sorry to tell the House that the east midlands area has the lowest paid women in England. As I have said, the Leicester of which I speak is not in the tourist guide.

Sixty five years ago the then hon. Member for Battersea, North Mr. Saklatvala, with whom I feel a special bond and who is tied with me through the threads of history, urged the House in his maiden speech on 23 November 1922

"to burst out of these time-worn prejudices and boldly take a new place".—[*Official Report*, 23 November 1922; Vol. 159, c. 117.]

The passage of time has endorsed the sentiments of Mr. Saklatvala. Only by lighting a new torch of equality and justice can we create a better society, a society and an age based not on privileges but on rights. We must pass to the next generation our passion for justice for young and old, black and white and women and men. We must astonish and dazzle them with our commitment to equality.

I have been sent to the Chamber by the people of Leicester, East to defend their rights, not to take part in a conspiracy to rob them of those rights. Leicester, that great midlands city, will not permit itself to be run from London. Any attempt to strip away the powers of the city will be met by a war of attrition. It is important for hon. Members to realise that the tourist map of Britain, like the democratic map, does not end at junction 9 of the M1. The Government may wish visitors who come to Britain to visit Leicester to see an example of a colony within the empire of the governor general, the Secretary of State for the Environment. If they do so, they will be in for a great surprise. On 11 June the empire of Leicester struck back.

Local democracy and the control by local people of their own communities, based on tolerance and mutual respect, is not the property of this or any other British Government. The people of Leicester, East are determined that the verdict of history will be with them.

10.57 am

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): It is my great pleasure this morning to praise the two maiden speeches that we have just heard. First, we heard my hon. Friend the new Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), who has joined my colleagues and I on the Conservative Benches. I welcome my hon. Friend and commend him on the excellence of his delivery and the historical travelogue that he provided for us in describing the beautiful land of Ryedale. It is obvious that my hon. Friend will make an excellent contribution to the House. His speech has evidenced that. Part of the poem which he mentioned runs:

"I wandered lonely as a cloud."

I am sure that those sentiments will not be echoed in tourist terms in Ryedale, a constituency which my hon. Friend has commended to us so splendidly.

I wish also to thank and welcome the new hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), who has outlined to us in terms of erudition and dignity the place that he will occupy in the Chamber as a replacement for probably one of the most active Members that I have encountered. The hon. Gentleman's predecessor, Mr. Peter Bruinvels, has now "retired", but when he entered this place he suggested that it was like a bolt out of the blue. He was most energetic in all his endeavours.

I commend the hon. Member for Leicester, East on his maiden speech. He is welcome here particularly as the first Asian Member or Member of Asian derivation to enter the Chamber for many years. I am certain that he will occupy that position with great dignity and honour.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Employment has demonstrated by his presentation of facts and figures and his grasp of his brief that in the short time in which he has occupied his new ministerial position he has gained an intimate knowledge of tourism. I am sure that he will do the House great honour as he continues to undertake his responsibilities.

There is a contrast to be drawn between the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister and that of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). The hon. Gentleman's capabilities are excellent but this morning he was able to present only the best of a weak case. I heard his presentation of the case earlier this morning on Radio 4. He was the first to admit that next year tourism will become the greatest creator of employment in Britain, and he must understand that his exposition of the tourist industry is not defensible if he demands that it pays higher wages than those that are paid in other industries.

My area is known as the Heart of England. I have the honour to declare an interest as an adviser to the Best Western Hotels group of independent hotels which provides admirable accommodation, and as a governor of the Old Course golf hotel and country club at St. Andrews in Scotland. The occupancy rate of hotels in the heart of England, which is 53 per cent., can be increased only if the wage element, the greatest factor in the cost element, is kept at a level that will attract those, from all sections of society, who can afford to stay in hotels. The wage element must grow reasonably, as it is growing reasonably in every other sector.

The Minister referred to the £5.4 billion that is earned from overseas tourists. Tourism is the greatest earner of foreign currency in the United Kingdom, even exceeding oil. Furthermore, £7 billion is generated at home from tourists. According to English Tourist Board figures, tourism earned £9 billion in 1984 and £10 billion in 1985 for this country. It is a major contribution to this country's economy. The hon. Member for Huddersfield is wrong to suggest that tourist development has taken place at the expense of industrial development.

Mr. Sheerman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bevan: I shall give way in a moment. I come from what is described as the "Iron heart of England." It has depended traditionally on a strong industrial and commercial economy, but because of the changing pattern of trade and manufacturing throughout the world and the development in third world areas of manufacturing, for which low wages are paid, its traditional economy has contracted and declined. Fortunately, the west midlands has been able to respond to that decline by developing the non-commercial side of industry. My opponent during the election campaign said that this had been at the expense of our traditional industries. He is the chairman of the west midlands enterprise board. I pay tribute to him for some of the excellent work that he has done in the industrial sector. However, he made the mistake of describing tourism as an ice cream and candy floss industry that is counter-productive to the industrial effort. That is not true. The people also believe that it is not true, because they voted for me, preferring my candidature.

Tourism in the west midlands has led to the creation of over 70,000 jobs and to the spending last year, within 25 miles of the Birmingham visitor and convention centre, where a great convention centre is coming into being, of £250 million and of over £500 million throughout the whole of the west midlands. They are tremendous figures which spell another message—that of popularity. The same could be said of this House. Above the Floor of this Chamber from which I speak people from all over the world are sitting and listening to a debate in this great mother of parliaments. It is a great tourist attraction. The message is clear: there is life beyond the factory bench and pure manufacture and commerce. The one industry supports the other. They are complementary.

I share the implied criticism of the hon. Member for Huddersfield of cheap imported goods, particularly those from the far east, for the souvenir trade. That can easily be remedied. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) is sitting on the Opposition Benches. I travel frequently around his constituency. I am able to purchase there souvenirs that have been created by native craftsmen. They are very good. In my constituency of Birmingham, Yardley I can also buy souvenirs that have been created by local craftsmen. The Minister will undoubtedly pursue not only his campaign as the scourge of the unhygienic, but also that of promoting the goods of local craftsmen. They are sold in many west midlands craft centres in support of the tourist industry.

There will be a great celebration this weekend at the national exhibition centre in Birmingham. When I was a councillor I had the privilege of helping to found that centre. There will be a Welsh choir celebration there on Saturday night. A thousand Welsh voices will be singing in that choir, the Canoldir choir. The hon. Member for

Caernarfon knows that "Canoldir" means the centre of the land. That choir will celebrate the Government's success in promoting tourist activities in my heartland and in other heartlands. Tourism has been a singularly outstanding success, upon which I congratulate the previous Secretary of State and former Minister of State for Employment, as I know that shortly I shall be able to congratulate the Ministers who now hold those appointments.

As chairman of the Back Bench all-party tourist committee, I pay tribute to its members who are here to take part in the debate. They have accompanied me to discussions with Ministers and they have helped me to prepare reports that have been taken into account by previous Secretaries of State. They led to the provision of the brown and white signposts that point to the increasing success of tourism throughout the country. They led also to the provision of training programmes. New jobs now amount to over 50,000 a year. Over 1.5 million people are now employed in this most important sector.

The future is bright for the tourist industry. Local authorities should be able to participate in this development, in partnership with the private sector. For example, in the Phoenix experiment the private sector could provide most of the finance, to which could be added the local authorities' seed bed provision of money. That could lead to the development of inner city projects. If they are all successful and if they are based on the high criteria that the tourist industry requires, they will be excellent for overseas visitors and indigenous alike and will also lead to the refurbishment of heritage buildings in town centres and to the provision of new buildings of great beauty and quality. They will provide equal and great perfection for the native occupier, and the tourist. They will give us an opportunity to offer beautiful cities that are available elsewhere in Europe and North America. They will increase the 14 million tourists who currently visit our shores and contribute to the currency that is refurbishing our purse.

The new community tax will be a useful tool. It will give the local authorities greater flexibility and a greater exchequer drawn from a wider catchment area. It will pump more money into the revenue aspect and add to the £65 million per annum to which the Minister referred. It will help to create the local authority portion of the capital—which will be added to by the private sector—that will help to create those beautiful and useful city centres that will become part of our heritage.

Some of us are proud to serve tourism. My officers and I, at no expense to the public purse and at the request of British Airways and the British Tourist Authority, went to America to give evidence in support of the British tourist trade when it went down to a trickle last year because of the threat of terrorism. That has now been successfully thwarted in this country and allows a safe venue for the many returning American visitors. I had the honour to give evidence to Congress. We were able to express and enumerate the wealth of heritage that is available for foreign tourists and to stress the aspect of safety. We were able to point out the warmth of welcome that our people show and the many talents and skills used to create a marvellous tourist provision after the regrettable decline of some of the industrial wealth, might and productivity of older days.

There is now a thrilling and excellent provision of facilities for tourists that the Government have successfully brought about in partnership with the people

[Mr. Bevan]

and local authorities and which will be provided even more successfully in the immediate future in partnership with public bodies and private enterprise.

11.13 am

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I make no apology for opening my remarks by reporting the views of two very different people. The first is the view expressed by Sir John Harvey-Jones, the then chairman of ICI and now Chancellor of Bradford university. He expressed this view at the Richard Dimbleby lecture in 1986. He said:

"It is often suggested that tourism offers salvation. It is equally clear that this cannot be. Those of us who love and enjoy holidays in our small country know that there are practical limits. We are also enthusiastic travellers ourselves and spend about the same abroad as tourists do in the UK. In fact, tourism's contribution to the balance of payments is only slightly positive. ICI's is positive to the tune of nearly £2,000 million a year—so if we go under you will need to entertain at least another 6 million tourists each year, that is 40 per cent. more than we now entertain, just to make up for the loss of my company. In any case, if we imagine the UK can get by with a bunch of people in smocks showing tourists around mediaeval castles we are quite frankly out of our minds. What's more, if that's the sort of future we offer our young, we shan't find them staying here to enjoy it."

The second view is that expressed by Lord Young, the Government's shiny new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in one of the earliest interviews he gave on being appointed. In *The Observer* on 21 June he said:

"When it comes to employment, all the evidence points to manufacturing as a shedder of labour. Manufacturing industry has been losing 10,000 jobs a month since 1966 and will carry on at that rate until the end of the first quarter of the next century."

I ask the House to dwell on those views. He said that 10,000 jobs a month have been lost since 1966 and believes that that will carry on until the end of the first quarter of the next century. Therefore, all hon. Members should be grappling with the realities of the future of our society.

In opening the debate the Minister—I understand completely that he is a new spokesman on these matters—said that Bradford, which I have the honour to represent, had put itself on the tourist map. Indeed, it has. It has made considerable efforts. However, I have to say that we recognise clearly that our salvation does not rely on tourism. We recognise that if we are to combat the very real social and economic problems facing us we have to create jobs and re-establish a manufacturing base in our city. That is necessary if we are to have a sustained future that offers security and well paid jobs to the majority of those who are now desperately looking for employment in our city.

I have to tell the Minister that later this month Bradford will be making an important application to the Government asking for Government support for a major package that will consist of £215 million over a five-year period. The council is proposing to contribute £36 million to that package with the remainder coming from the Government through support from the European social fund and the regional development fund. In that package we are aiming to improve the infrastructure of our city because we believe that that is crucial if we are to promote tourism, regenerate our local economy and revive the manufacturing base that we so desperately need in Bradford.

The Government's record on inner cities is one of the continuing neglect and increasing hostility. We can see

that very vividly in Bradford. We have been robbed of £70 million since 1979 through the loss of rate support grant. We have seen our investment in housing and education cut savagely. Everything said by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) is echoed in my city. This afternoon the council's housing committee will be discussing a major problem facing the Lower Grange estate where several hundred houses have to be demolished because of serious defects that have been discovered and where new building has to take place. That will be impossible without major support from the Government. That is the sort of problem that comes before us each and every day and it cannot be ignored. I am sad to say that the Government have been ignoring such problems for a long time. They have imposed enormous burdens on local authorities and over the past eight years those burdens have made it more difficult for local authorities in inner cities to tackle those problems.

Having turned her back on the inner cities and having made it extremely difficult for inner city councils to reverse inner city decay, the Prime Minister has now turned again on Labour-controlled councils. She saw the Tory party rejected decisively in the inner cities at the general election, but now she is blaming Labour-controlled councils for high unemployment, crumbling schools, bad housing and the decaying environment which wracks our inner cities. She is trying to make out that Labour councils are responsible for the neglect and decay and to make them the scapegoats for the failure of her policies. The blame for the worsening plight of the inner cities lies with the Prime Minister and the Government's policies of the past eight years.

The Prime Minister has now set up a team of Ministers to tackle inner city problems, but she is eight years too late. She has spent more time in Moscow than in Bradford. Bradford has been left off the list of the task force inner city areas and it is now revealed that the cities that have been receiving some modest extra assistance have not even fully spent those limited funds. It is extremely hard, even for Ministers, to find any new, real jobs which have been created as a result of the task force initiative.

Prince Charles has spent more time and made more effort to discover the problems of our inner cities and to suggest solutions to them than the Prime Minister. He displays genuine concern and compassion about unemployment, poverty and the social divisions and tensions that are bred by poverty, social disadvantage and social deprivation. The Prime Minister should listen to him, the churches, the local authorities, the local communities and the Members of Parliament who represent inner cities. If she was prepared to listen—this Prime Minister finds listening the most difficult of all the tasks she is required to do—she would discover the problems of the inner cities and some solutions to them.

Rather than embroiling Prince Charles in a public and embarrassing constitutional argument and making suggestions that it is acceptable for him to interest himself in inner city problems so long as he does not take political initiatives—

Mr. Gregory: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Am I correct in thinking that the debate is about tourism? In over five minutes, I do not seem to have heard one mention of any aspect of tourism. I seek your guidance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The debate is about tourism, but it arises on an Adjournment motion

and it is traditional in those circumstances to allow a fairly wide-ranging debate. However, I am sure that the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) will bear in mind that tourism is the subject.

Mr. Madden: I am sure that you will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that today Downing street was briefing the press that the Prime Minister and the Government were willing to tolerate Prince Charles taking an interest in the inner cities so long as he did not take what are described as political initiatives. If inner city problems are to be dealt with, political initiatives are vital. I hope that the Prince will not be deterred in any way by the Government encouraging increasing political attacks from continuing the important work that he has undertaken in recent years.

I remind the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) that Bradford is an important tourist centre and has been doing a great deal to promote tourism. But there is no way in which that will solve our problems, particularly our unemployment. There is no way that we can talk solely about one aspect of life in our inner cities and ignore the rest. That has been the folly of the Government's approach to tourism and the development of their policies.

The inner cities do not need any more gimmicks or token gestures; they need understanding, help and long-term planning to enable people to have confidence in long-term funding and the development of important projects. Tourism is important to Bradford and Bradford welcomes visitors. It wants to improve its image and the general conditions in which its citizens live and work. In that way, visitors can enjoy their visits to Bradford and other parts of Yorkshire and will be eager to return.

One of our most important needs is an improved rail service. I have urged the Prime Minister—

Mr. Bevan: I am glad that Bradford welcomes visitors. Surely the hon. Gentleman will welcome the establishment of the national photographic museum in that marvellous city and admit that it was the result of the Government's enterprise in supporting tourist ventures? It has attracted millions of visitors to Bradford and brought in a substantial amount of income. Does he agree that that ranks as an important inner city development?

Mr. Madden: I certainly do and further important developments include the Alhambra theatre and St. George's hall. But at the same time, I would argue that the promotion of tourism would have been much more effective if the Government had provided more support and understanding. Certainly our social and economic problems would not be as serious as they are today if we had had more support, understanding and financial assistance from the Government than we have had over the past eight years.

In the past I urged the Prime Minister to meet deputations from Bradford to discuss our problems, but my requests were rejected. I urged her to visit Bradford, but she did not see fit to do so apart from some fleeting, secret and rushed visits. I now urge her and Lord Young to come to Bradford by train. They would find that the train from London to Leeds often has a power failure and arrives late. That is the experience of many of us. On arrival, they would have to discover from which platform the Bradford train departed. They would often find that that involved dashing around several platforms, through tunnels upstairs. That is no joke when carrying suitcases. They would often find difficulty getting a seat. The trains

are usually grossly overcrowded, dirty and extremely slow. The service has been rightly described as providing cattle-truck conditions.

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman may well be right, but does he think that he is doing any good to the image of Bradford and to Bradford's attempt to encourage tourism with this sort of diatribe?

Mr. Madden: I would even extend the invitation to travel to Bradford by train to the Minister. Indeed, I wish he would. Next Wednesday I shall be one of a deputation meeting the chairman of British Rail to urge the electrification of the line between Bradford and Leeds. That is absolutely crucial to the promotion of tourism and the regeneration of our local economy, to combat high unemployment and to create growth in local industry. If the Minister does not understand that, we shall have to use great persuasion to convince him of the importance of good, modern, efficient rail links. We need them if we are to face the year 2000 with confidence.

I hope that we shall have the assistance of the Minister, the Prime Minister and Lord Young in persuading the chairman of British Rail that it is worth investing in the electrification of that line. We recognise that our rail service today is markedly worse than it was 30 years ago. Recently, Bradford has been removed from the pocket timetable; our telephone inquiry service has been moved to Leeds; and our limited InterCity services have been reduced only within the past few weeks. Bradford's railway service is rapidly turning into that of a branch line. Without that electrification there will be major obstacles to the promotion of tourism in Bradford. I hope that the Minister understands that and will give us his full-hearted assistance in persuading the chairman of British Rail to invest in electrification between Bradford and Leeds.

If we are to overcome our problems, we need co-operation and not hostility from the Government. We need Government attention, Government understanding and Government financial support. Most of all we need Government assistance. Recently, Bradford launched the "Bradford is bouncing back" campaign. That was based on the "Glasgow is best" campaign. We are desperately trying to improve the image of the city and to encourage visitors with the hope that they will come back again. [Interruption.] Despite the sniggers of some Conservative Members, it is no good trying to sweep away the problems of our cities with glossy gimmicks. We cannot, nor do we wish to conceal those problems. We want to see real understanding and support from the Government.

I appreciate that the Minister is still in the early days of his appointment. I hope that the Minister, bearing in mind his exercise with combs and brushes, will come to Bradford. We are not in need of that type of attention, but we are in desperate need of the Government's listening ear. We need the Government to listen to our problems as well as to listen to the ideas that we have to overcome those problems.

Bradford believes in self-help. Indeed, as the Minister said at the beginning of the debate, we have done much of the work to put ourselves on the tourist map despite the Government and in spite of the Government. However, now we are coming to the Government to say that we need specific help for specific projects. I hope that, as a result of this debate and other things that are taking place in

[Mr. Madden]

other places, we will get that help because Bradford desperately needs it if we are to bounce back in the way that we want.

11.31 am

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): As the newly-elected Member for Torbay, I believe that there are two ways in which to approach the difficulties faced both in the inner cities and in other areas of the country. One is by efficiency and promoting ourselves in the best possible way. I believe that the way that my election result was announced — the first of the election night — was an example of efficiency and a good way in which to promote a particular town.

This morning we have heard a great deal about the problems of Bradford, and I am not sure that that is necessarily the best way of attracting visitors to that town. We are efficient in Torbay, but there is also a great deal of room for improvement and for the types of partnership that have been described today. In my constituency I have a large historical building, Cockington Court, which has been owned by the borough council for many years. It is now rather rundown and in the past it has been used as an ice cream factory. In due course I shall be visiting my hon. Friend the Minister, because there are great plans to turn Cockington Court into a centre of rural crafts and skills. I hope that that development will represent an example of partnership between the local authority and the local community, aided by some Government sponsorship.

I believe that this debate has got slightly off the subject of tourism, so I should like to draw the attention of the House to one or two items in the Gracious Speech that will be of great help to tourism. First, the proposed reform of the licensing laws—I regard that reform as long overdue — is likely to improve the full-time employment prospects of some 50,000 people, and that is welcome.

There is a second part to the reform of the licensing legislation that will be important and significant. For some years I pounded the beat not very far from here as a police officer in the Metropolitan police special constabulary. There were two ways in which to apprehend and fight crime. One was the type of crime to which one would get called over the personal radio. The second type of crime was thoroughly predictable and occurred at about a quarter to eleven every night — alcohol-related crime. I believe that the reform of licensing legislation will improve the conditions for police officers and, in particular, those police officers who are regularly called to disturbances when public houses are emptied at exactly the same time every night. I welcome the proposed reform contained in the Gracious Speech.

The other reform which I have no doubt will be subject to considerable debate, and which, also has an important impact on tourism, is the proposed community charge. Some aspects of the community charge will no doubt be controversial and I should like to draw attention to the rather subtle change that is taking place in the character of many of our centres of tourism. If someone owns a hotel, he pays business rates. However, the moment that person changes the hotel establishment into a rest home, he is excluded from paying rates. Indeed, there are many advantages to running a rest home. I am not knocking the rest home industry, because it is extremely important. It

is a non-seasonal employer and rest homes have residents for 12 months of the year, but the change has the unfortunate consequence that each hotel that turns itself into a rest home places an added burden on the rest of the community who are paying rates. One aspect of the community charge that has not been fully recognised, but which I welcome, is that the charge will be spread much wider throughout the community. Residents of rest homes will not pay the community charge, but the proposed changes will mean a reduced burden on the over-pressed ratepayer.

I believe that the future of tourism in Britain depends on the use of our imagination. We have tremendous opportunities and I believe that the emphasis should not just be on knocking and complaining, but should be on taking advantage of our many opportunities. This morning I heard one remark that related, somewhat disparagingly, to a "Mickey Mouse" enterprise. Anyone who has been to Disneyworld in Florida can see exactly how a community has grasped an opportunity and has made the most of it. That development provides a tremendous amount of employment and has attracted visitors not just to the particular town but to the entire state of Florida.

We have heard that tourism will not be a substitute for manufacturing and heavy industry, but in some cases it must be a substitute. I cite the town of Corby in Northamptonshire, as an example. Until 1979 I was the candidate for Corby. The steelworks in that town were closed down virtually overnight, with 6,500 people made redundant. That town became the microcosm of many of the inner-city problems that we face. It is remarkable that Corby has now been chosen as the centre for a possible theme park. That theme park will provide an enormous amount of full-time employment. Surely it is such initiative that we should welcome.

The future is in tourism. It has been pointed out that tourism is now the largest earner of foreign income for this country, and that must be welcome. What is the future? I believe that towns, including Bradford, and including those towns with an established tourist background, such as the Georgian city of Bath, and Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford, will capitalise on those links that will attract visitors from all over the world.

Torquay's links with Agatha Christie — another distinguished author — and Brunel have not been sufficiently recognised, and we intend to promote Torquay as a centre, not just for people who are interested in literature and have followed the books of Agatha Christie, but for those who are interested in Brunel and his background. Those will be important developments and we must take advantage of such opportunities.

I feel that I would disappoint the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) if I did not include in my maiden speech a brief reference to his obsession. Many of my constituents worked in the Security Service for a long time and have retired to Torquay, where they play an active role in the community. I pay particular tribute to a member of MI5, Jim Skardon, who died recently. His work and achievements over the years have not been recognised. I make those final remarks for the benefit of the hon. Member for Workington, who, sad to say, is not present.

11.41 am

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport). Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make my maiden speech in this interesting debate. My predecessor as the hon. Member for Southport, Sir Ian Percival, retired after meritorious service to the House. Although I could never agree with his efforts to bring back capital punishment, his work in the House, especially as Solicitor-General, and in the constituency will be well remembered and I wish him and his charming wife a happy retirement.

For 63 years our beautiful seaside resort of Southport, which is now firmly on the map, had Conservative Members. One of the reasons why thoughtful voters—I use the word “thoughtful” rather guardedly—voted for me was the fact that I have long fought for a better deal for tourism, not only in Southport but throughout Britain.

Many holiday towns and resorts have been starved of the grant aid that is needed to help set up new hotels, shopping facilities and attractions that provide employment. They have suffered as a consequence. For instance, in Southport unemployment among the young remains at the unacceptable level of 17.8 per cent.

The lack of further aid for the tourist industry—which brought in £12.5 billion from British and overseas visitors last year alone has been pointed out by the English, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland tourist boards in all their recent protestations.

Southport, with its population of 100,000, can be taken as an example of private enterprise and local government working closely together, but it is a strained relationship, and cuts in facilities over the years have hampered the tourist industry of the region. Southport, with its excellent conference and shopping facilities, 12 miles of beach, world famous flower show and five national and international golf courses, including Royal Birkdale, attracts many thousands of visitors to the north west of England each year, but help is needed for us to continue, expand and thrive.

Tourism is a major industry, employing 1.5 million people full time, but cries for help are ignored, with the result that employers have to employ part-timers or young people on low wages. I have fought hard against the low-wage structure in the holiday industry and I shall ask the Government to investigate further the abysmal wage structures where the gross average full-time weekly pay is only £83.

The Government are only scratching the surface of advancement when they establish development corporations such as the one on Merseyside, which fringes Southport. Those corporations do a fine job, as is instanced by the Albert dock in Liverpool, but those are only one-off schemes and are not what the regional tourist industry needs at the moment.

We heard in the Queen's Speech that sewerage is to be privatised. What an appalling situation now faces our seaside resorts. The EEC recommendations on standards of bathing waters have not yet been accepted by the Government, with the result that many of our beaches are now among the worst protected in Europe. I shudder to think what might happen if standards drop even further because of privatisation.

The life blood of tourism is a satisfactory understanding, especially between European countries, of currency standards, and I was disappointed that nothing in the

Queen's Speech committed the Government to full membership of the European monetary system—a move which could only help exchange rates in the tourist trade.

I know that European regional development fund grants are available for tourism. According to the paper “Finance from Europe”, the grants are for industrial, tourist or service activities and the fund may contribute 20 per cent. of investment costs. In some cases aid may not exceed half that granted by the Government. The fund's contribution is also limited by the number of jobs created or preserved. However, under the British practice all EEC grants go to the Government to defray the costs of Government grants, so that firms do not benefit directly from the EEC contribution. I should welcome a reversal of the system so that firms could benefit directly.

It is pleasing to note that there is increased interest in the regional development and reintroduction of transport links to the traditional resorts in the United Kingdom. However, greater emphasis must be placed on this subject and particularly on extending spurs from motorway systems to the resorts and tackling bottlenecks such as that at Ormskirk on the way to Southport.

Another issue that could easily be tackled is a minor adjustment of motorway signposting of resorts. It would be simple to add a few extra words than those allowed to advertise various attractions and I am assured that that would be financed by the resorts—self help.

Restored rail links to replace those irresponsibly axed by a previous Minister are being considered and if the Burscough Curves rail extension is allowed it will open up the northern gateway to Southport and allow our many Scottish visitors to visit the town with much less difficulty.

The national tourist boards are introducing the new “crown classification” for holiday accommodation. It will take some years to implement and one must ask whether a registration system for all accommodation should not be the rule. That would surely upgrade accommodation and encourage tourists to return to the British holiday market.

Having been a councillor for about 20 years, I have repeatedly stated that local authorities should be encouraged to develop tourism strategies. Some, such as Southport, are already doing so, but should not the incentive of financial benefits be offered to those who are producing long-term strategies? For example, there is no help to the private sector which helps to sell British resorts. There is also a need for funding for the special restoration of our Victorian assets, such as Southport's pier, which is the second longest in the country and is a landmark which is remarkably popular with traditionalists and visitors.

Tourism is an industry that should be given the funding that it so rightly deserves, and I hope that my request to Ministers on that subject will receive a sympathetic hearing leading to action and future prosperity for resorts that are now striving to help the nation's economy. If helped, they can create many more thousands of jobs.

A few days ago I noted that the Secretary of State for Employment stated that he planned to take an extremely close and personal interest in the tourist industry. He also said that he will consider what contribution the Government can make. I ask that that consideration and contribution will be shown not only to this great capital city but to the regions—especially the north-west and Southport.

I have noticed that most hon. Members always invite the right hon. Lady the Prime Minister, or one of her Ministers, to visit their city or town to see at first hand the

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

problems there. No one seems to invite you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I extend to you an open invitation to see an active resort that is working well, but needing further resources. Come to Southport; see its beauty; dine on the fare from our oldest and world-famous shrimp industry. The invitation is yours, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

11.52 am

Mr. James Kilfedder (North, Down): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the two hon. Gentlemen who preceded me in the debate. The first was the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), whose father served in this House and was here when I was a new hon. Member. Of course, we know the hon. Member by another name — Nigel West — but I am sure that he and the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) will enjoy themselves in the House. I was impressed by their speeches, sincerity and eloquence, and I hope that they will retain their freshness through all the years for which they remain in the House. I hope that it will still be with them when they reach the Front Benches, or become cantankerous Back-Benchers.

A debate about terrorism — no wonder I mention terrorism, having spoken about the hon. Member for Torbay — a debate about tourism would not be complete without reference to Northern Ireland. There is always an immediate reaction when one speaks about normal happenings in that part of the United Kingdom. The question is asked: "Can there be tourism in a country that has been wracked by terrorism for the past 18 years?" People ask whether anyone would even consider going to Ulster, which is plagued by such an appalling media image. The answer, of course, is quite simple. It has been provided by the considerable number of discerning people — I emphasise that adjective — who visit Northern Ireland every year from every part of the world. They come from England, Scotland, Wales, the Republic of Ireland, America, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. The answer to the question of tourism there, can be found in the glowing accounts that they give of their visits, which effectively rebut the television and press picture of Northern Ireland.

They all start their visits with a degree of trepidation, but before long they are charmed by the land and people, and it is a matter of deep regret to me that the only picture ever presented of Northern Ireland is one of doom, gloom, bloodshed and strife. Most of the people who visit Northern Ireland hear only of the actions of terrorism on the radio in the morning or when reading the papers during the day. The people of Northern Ireland deserve the sustained support of every hon. Member and of everyone in the rest of the United Kingdom.

The highest praise should go to all who are involved in tourism there. I mention only a few: the chairman of the Northern Ireland tourist board, Sir John Swinson; the chief executive of the tourist board, Shane Belfort; the officials in the Department of Economic Development who deal with tourism in Northern Ireland and consider the giving of grants to aid tourism; and, especially, all those who are involved in the hotel, catering industries, boarding houses and restaurants, and all those who are connected in any way with visitors to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you had an invitation from the hon. Member for Southport to visit his lovely

constituency. May I give you another invitation: to come to Northern Ireland? I invite every hon. Member to come to Northern Ireland, not only to see the trouble that is afoot there, but to see the wonderful, beautiful places and marvellous people. If they only saw those things, hon. Members would realise and appreciate why Ulster men and women are so militant about the land of their birth. It is a place that they prize highly, as well as prizing the fact that they are part of the United Kingdom. If hon. Members go there they will discover the characteristics of Ulster people, who are generous. I know that whenever there is an international appeal, Ulster people give more per head of the population than those in any other part of the United Kingdom. And that in a land that suffers from tremendous unemployment. They should be praised for that. Ulster people are generous, humorous and kind-hearted. Hon. Members who come to Northern Ireland will discover that there is a magic and beauty in the land of Ulster that they may not find in the rest of the United Kingdom.

The Department of Economic Development issued a guideline statement two years ago which contained the objective of an 8 per cent. growth per year in tourism, making a total of 170,000 holiday visitors by 1990. That is not a great number compared with the number of people who visit the rest of the United Kingdom and London. More should be done by the English, Welsh and Scottish tourist boards to guide people over to Northern Ireland. Let them see what Northern Ireland is like, so that by coming there and spending their money they can help the economy of Northern Ireland. The projected figure of 170,000 visitors — by visitors I mean real visitors, not those who come for reasons such as visiting relatives or friends, or on business — would help the tourist earnings in Northern Ireland and bring in about £95 million. An additional 300 permanent jobs would be provided in the industry, and that is all-important in Northern Ireland.

In 1985 a total of 63,000 visitors came from the United States and Canada and, in the same year, 21,000 came from Great Britain — mainly from Scotland and the north of England. We must increase those figures substantially. At present, only 9,000 people are involved in tourism. Tourism in Northern Ireland has tremendous potential for expansion and can make a great contribution to the creation of new jobs in the province. We need to encourage British tour operators. That is why I make this appeal to the Government and to hon. Members to persuade British tour operators, who are currently promoting go-as-you-please vouchers and holidays to the Irish Republic, to include Northern Ireland in their programme for 1988. National coach tour operators should include at least one night's stay in Ulster as part of a Scotland-Ireland touring package. Hon. Members can assist by telling any tourist agency in which they are involved directly or indirectly to recommend Northern Ireland as a place worth seeing.

I appeal to the media, and especially to television, to present the other side of Northern Ireland. It is a realistic and attractive destination for general touring and for special interest holidays. Those special interests include angling — we attract anglers from all parts of Europe to competitions in Northern Ireland — golf, cruising, yachting, bowling, the arts and many others.

As we enter a new era in the history of Northern Ireland, it is essential for us to endeavour to rebuild the Province by tackling the scourge of unemployment.

Tourism can help to promote jobs, especially for the young, who are robbed of their zeal and idealism when they leave school and face life largely on the dole. Tourism can help the Ulster economy, and that is why I ask the Government and Parliament to give a boost to Northern Ireland. I ask them to lead the way.

Tourism can help the Ulster people in another way by showing up the common origins of the people who live in Northern Ireland. For some strange reason which I have never fully understood, all Ulster Loyalists are supposed to have come to Northern Ireland at the time of the plantation by James I. Of course, that is not so. The first people to land in the island of Ireland came from Scotland. They landed on the north-east shore of Ireland—in present-day Ulster—about 7000 BC, and people have been travelling to and fro ever since. The famous kingdom of Dalriada was established in part of Scotland and part of Northern Ireland. It is clear from myth and early history that the people and kings of Ulster were for ever fighting the people of the rest of the island of Ireland. That is part of the tradition, and it can be seen in every story told about those distant days.

I wish to emphasise that we in Northern Ireland have a common heritage which today presents unique places of interest to be visited by tourists from Great Britain and abroad. There is the famous Navan fort, which, fortunately, was protected from those who were trying to dig up more stone in the vicinity. It is a remnant of the palace of the Ulster kings going back to pagan times—before Christianity and before the divisions of Christianity. The stone idols which stand on an island in the lakes of Fermanagh were worshipped long before Christianity came to the Province. Perhaps the idols have a message for Northern Ireland. Although they have one body, they have two faces. That duplication is repeated in Castle Ward, which was built in 1765 by Lord Bangor. He and his wife could not agree about the facade on the building. Lord Bangor preferred the classical style while his wife wanted a Strawberry Hill gothic facade. They settled their argument by building the front and the back in different styles, and Lord and Lady Bangor lived in peace thereafter. I do not know whether there is a message in that for Northern Ireland, but I believe that people can belong to different bodies and still live in peace together, even though they may have different aspirations.

Before I finish, I wish to mention some of the amenities offered in Northern Ireland. The seaside resorts include Bangor in my constituency, which was the centre of learning in Europe while England and the rest of Europe were in the Dark Ages. It was a centre of learning long before the city of Dublin was established. We have the mountains of Mourne, the sensational Antrim coast, the moors and mountains of Sperrin, the magnificence of Strangford lough with its wildlife, the rivers and lakes of Fermanagh and the many other rivers which are heavy with trout and salmon, and Lough Erne, which has claimed many world coarse angling match records.

The land of Ulster is steeped in history and colour and it is a place well worth visiting. There is tourist accommodation to suit every pocket. People travel from distant lands to Northern Ireland. The roads and transport systems are as good as in any other part of the United Kingdom, and certainly better than in the Irish Republic, and there are amenities for the specialist tourist as well as for the entire family. That is why, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, I urge you and my colleagues in the House to visit Northern Ireland. Then they would realise why Ulster has a very special place in the hearts of its people.

12.5 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am glad to follow my friend from Ulster, the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder). There is a danger of the debate turning into a series of descriptions of our constituencies and advertisements for the tourist trade in them. I could compete well with all hon. Members, since I represent Snowdonia, the Menai straits, the Llyn peninsula, the villages of Abersoch, Aberdaron, Nefyn and Criccieth and also Aberglaslyn pass and Beddgelert, but I shall try to restrict myself to the issues that the Government should be facing rather than extending general invitations, which none the less I do.

I apologise for the fact that I may have to leave before the end of the debate because of some of the difficulties of travelling in the United Kingdom.

I congratulate those who have made their maiden speeches today. We have had four excellent maiden speeches, from the hon. Members for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and for Southport (Mr. Fearn). I was especially interested in the speech of the hon. Member for Ryedale, who made some of the points relevant to the tourist industry very graphically. There must be sensitivity in the development of tourism to ensure that it develops in harmony with the local community. It can grow happily, but if it develops in other ways it can create unnecessary tensions. That must be fundamental to our thinking and to our approach.

Tourism is very important to Wales. The industry employs about 90,000 people—8 per cent. of the work force in Wales—which compares with about 15,000 workers in the coal and steel industries respectively. That puts matters into context. However, many of the jobs are part-time and many are seasonal. Whatever other hon. Members may say, many are low-paid jobs. In many areas the only person working in a family may be a youngster aged 16 or 17, and if he or she is earning only £40 to £50 a week, it is not much on which to live.

Mr. Lee: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that Department of Employment surveys show that the vast majority of people in part-time employment want exactly that because it fits their lifestyles and family commitments? Of course many people want permanent full-time work, but many of those in part-time jobs want just that.

Mr. Wigley: I accept that that is the case, but many people in part-time employment would like full-time employment. Often, because of the over-supply of those wanting part-time employment, employers can exploit people and get them to work for fairly low rates. I am more worried about the seasonal aspect, which is a problem in an area such as mine. The tourist season in London seems to run from March until October or November, as we all see as we try to move round the vicinity of the Palace of Westminster, but in my area the season lasts for only two months. The seasonality of employment opportunities can be a great problem, and so, too, can the uneconomic use of capital investment. If one has any facility running at 200 per cent. capacity for two months and 10 per cent. capacity

[Mr. Wigley]

for the rest of the year, that begs questions about effective economic use. The capital investment has to justify itself over a limited period. That then leads to problems.

We are debating tourism a couple of months after the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs published and presented its report to the House of Commons. I think that it is in order for me to refer to it, although it is not the main subject of our debate. We shall have a detailed debate on the report in due course, when the Welsh Office has responded to the recommendations. It is an important report, and I hope that in responding to it the Government will also respond to the alternative report, of which the former Member for Carmarthen, Dr. Roger Thomas and I were the authors. The Wales tourist board has drawn attention to the fact that many of the points in the alternative report need a response from the Government. Some county councils in Wales have also said that, so I hope that the Minister of State, Welsh Office will take that on board.

I strongly support some of the comments made by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench. He referred to the need for a partnership between public and private investment in tourism. I appreciate that a large number of individual concerns are wholly private enterprises, as the Minister said, but they also need interplay and interdependence with public funds. An example is infrastructure for tourism. Often that has to be provided by the public sector—often only by the public sector. Another example is the strategy for the development of tourism. There has to be a public involvement there. With regard to pump-priming finance, even small concerns can get off the ground much more easily if there is pump priming from the public sector. Also, there is a public sector role in the co-ordination and promotion of the development of tourism. Therefore, there is a need for that partnership between public and private sectors, at not only central, but local, level.

I strongly support the concept of the community approach to tourism mentioned by the hon. Member for Huddersfield and by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale. It must be central to our thinking, particularly in the rural and scattered areas. In a metropolis such as London it may be more difficult to develop that in the same way, but in the more rural areas it is an essential feature.

I should like to refer to some comments in the Minister's speech. I mentioned private sector enterprise and low pay. I am not convinced that the change in the licensing laws will be a panacea that will open up thousands of new jobs. It may be, but will people who come on holiday spend more of their money on alcoholic drink? If they do, they will have less to spend on other things. I can see that there is an argument about people's personal freedom and how they spend their time, but I am not convinced that the change will lead to thousands of new jobs. Time will tell, and it will be interesting to see how that develops.

I welcome the Minister's comments on the need for the tourist industry to have regard to the needs of disabled people. He highlighted the need for greater training and the three S's—spotless, signposting and service. I expect that we all support them.

Both the main report and alternative report from the Select Committee highlighted four or five items as needing attention from the Government. The first is the need for the Wales tourist board to retain its presence and existence, contrary to the recommendations by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, about which we are worried. There is also a need to give the board marketing powers overseas, which the Scottish tourist board has and is using effectively in North America. It is getting good value for money.

Overseas tourism in Wales is much lower than it should be as a proportion of overseas tourists coming to the United Kingdom. Only 4 per cent. come to Wales, which is a disturbingly low proportion, particularly in view of the importance of overseas tourism in terms of revenue. Overseas visitors will probably spend £120 or £140 per visit, compared with only £40 spent by the domestic visitor. Therefore, there is an economic benefit. It comes from the nature of the visitors' stay. It has been shown that 51 per cent. of overseas visitors stay in hotels or bed-and-breakfast accommodation, compared with only 17 per cent. of domestic visitors to Wales. Of domestic visitors, some 53 per cent. stay in caravans or tents, which usually leads to a lower input into the economy and sustains fewer permanent jobs than would be the case if they stayed in hotels and bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Therefore, there is a need for us to develop the overseas dimension. The Government should apply themselves to that.

Both reports stress the need for local authorities to have a greater involvement in co-ordinating tourist development, particularly in regard to education. In our education system in Wales there is a need for a greater emphasis on skills that are relevant to tourism, which the Minister mentioned. There is also a need for greater resources to be given to tourism, as I mentioned in an intervention. There is a stark contrast between the money that goes into other sectors of the economy and that which goes into tourism. For a few thousand pounds more per job in developing tourism one could create many more jobs than in some of the other sectors where investment goes.

According to both Select Committee reports, there should be a statutory registration scheme for tourist accommodation in Wales. In some parts of Wales we depend on airports such as Manchester, as well as Cardiff. We should develop overseas flights that fly into one airport and out of another. I think that the term used in the trade is the open jaw approach. It needs to be encouraged as much as possible.

There is also a need for change in the rules in section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 in regard to additionality. At the moment the Wales tourist board is restricted to being a lender of last resort. It would like to take the initiative more often. It would like to be an instigator rather than just the last resort. It would like to have a more active role. There needs to be a change in the legislation so that that can be done.

In our alternative report there is one theme which I should like to stress again and which I mentioned earlier. This is the interface between the local community and tourism. Tourism can have a major impact on a community. It can cause stresses. If one is stuck in a traffic jam for hours behind a caravan, one starts to get a little annoyed. Another example is if one's local pub is taken over by hordes of visitors. There is a positive and a negative side. That was brought out graphically in a book

published some 10 or 15 years ago by the former Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), called "Tourism Blessing or Blight". There is tension, and therefore one needs to develop tourism hand in hand with the needs and aspirations of the local community.

The local community has to feel part of that development. The people have to feel involved and that they are not under threat from the growth of tourism. That is not just in social and cultural terms, but in environmental terms also. If one gets the balance right, tourism can grow in a healthy manner. If one gets it wrong, one creates tension. The Minister of State, Welsh Office, who is present at the moment, is aware of the tensions that can occur at times. The need for a holistic approach to the development of tourism and an approach that is geared to the local community is fundamental.

We need to ensure that new projects are developed hand in hand with the local community. There could be positive ways of doing that. When public money is going into tourism, questions should be asked about the maximisation of local employment, which is of prime importance to the local community, the maximisation of the purchasing of supplies from within the local community, and making facilities developed for tourism also available to the local community. One could put conditions on grant availability to require as many of those things as possible. That would help to ensure that the local community identifies its own wellbeing with the development of such projects.

Projects should also be developed in a way that strengthens the fabric of the community. That can be done particularly if people in schools have the opportunity to develop skills and to make them available for the jobs that are coming in the tourist industry.

The Wales Tourist Board needs to be able to help people who set up in small-scale tourist industries. We need the appointment of a person, perhaps called a community tourist development officer for Wales, so that the people employed by the tourist board are not all in the main bureaucratic headquarters. We need people who are at the grass roots of the communities, and perhaps we could even see the designation of tourism development villages, with people designated to promote that sort of work. Such schemes could be geared to trying to bring local people out to take the initiative of becoming involved in the tourist industry. There is a real challenge there. I should also like to see some EC money being invested. I think that applications have been made for such money and I hope that the EC will support that sort of initiative.

I should like to turn to another heading in our alternative report — the matter of the image that is projected of Wales. This is a special problem for Wales. There are not many Scottish Members here today. Perhaps it is a problem for Northern Ireland Members as well, to judge from the speech by the hon. Member for North Down. Wales does not have as clear an image as Scotland, and we need to work hard on that. Very often there is an idea that Wales has simply coal and steel industries, with a sort of rundown industrial past — a "how green was my valley and how grey it is now" approach. That is not good enough and we need to approach the matter of an image in a coherent manner and project the cultural and environmental angles in a strong way.

We also need to project the image of the famous people that we have had and have now in various realms. They

can be ambassadors for getting across an image of Wales. The Welsh tourist industry needs to be aware of the image projected so that the reality seen by people when they come to stay in Wales corresponds to the image. There is no point in having the reality of a second-rate Blackpool when we are trying to project something else abroad. There must be coherence in the image and the Welsh tourist industry has to play a role side by side with the Wales Tourist Board and the British Tourist Association.

The Welsh Office needs a stronger tourist section. It has a limited number of people involved in tourism. We know that from the comments made by the Minister in evidence to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs. It needs one Minister to bring tourism, sport, leisure, culture, environment and rural affairs under one hat. The Wales tourist board should set up marketing regions conterminous with counties. In the counties themselves that would involve tourist development committees, and the counties could develop and plan a strategy for tourism in their own areas. Such tourism development committees should have on them people co-opted from the tourist industry, to make sure that development is agreed with the industry, goes along lines that are acceptable to the industry and makes sense.

Local authorities should be given more finance to enable them to play a greater role in tourism. That brings me to my next point, which is about the rate support grant formula. Very often that formula does not place enough emphasis on the additional costs that local authorities face as a result of tourism. I am talking about such things as the provision of car parks, the improvement of roads and refuse disposal. Additional costs also have to be met by non-local authorities such as health and ambulance services; operating in areas with high levels of tourism. The rate support grant formula is not adequate for local authorities, and the capital allocation is inadequate to meet the need to develop the tourist industry in a positive way.

Earlier, I spoke about seasonality. I impress on the Minister, especially in the context of the Department of Employment, that seasonal workers who have been working in tourism for three years lose their unemployment benefit after that time. They are designated as seasonal workers, but in many tourist areas they do not have alternative work. I am sure that that is also true in the south-west and the north-west, and it is certainly true in Wales. Those people would like to work all the year round. It is not their fault that they are seasonal workers, and to lose unemployment benefit after the third winter is invidious and the system needs to be changed. The DHSS has been looking at that and the commissioners have been investigating. I should like to see the Minister's Department playing a role in reviewing that situation.

In the context of agriculture, there is a need to make sure that where tourism and agriculture are developing hand in hand there is compatibility. They must be complementary and we must not expect farmers totally to give up farming and grow tents and caravans. If that happens, all sorts of environmental and planning problems will arise. There should be support for the agricultural existence of the farmer and for tourism, and the two can go hand in hand.

Some aspects of tourism can be detrimental and can pose a real threat to communities. The wrong sort of tourism has an impact on the environment and on the cultural patterns of a community. At the moment one sees

[Mr. Wigley]

a number of property speculators looking at tourist-type areas. Time share is popular at the moment, and one knows that as much as £250 million is kicking about in some of the large companies that are looking for outlets to spend that money. One of my fears is that that may not develop tourism in a way that is compatible with the objectives of the Wales tourist board and may not be what is needed for harmony in the Welsh communities. I suggest to the Welsh Office that it must be very sensitive in looking at planning appeals, to make sure that if they are granted it is in the sure knowledge that no tensions will be built up.

I want to look at tourism in a positive way. In the concluding two sentences of our alternative report we say:

"The Welsh people should take a more positive attitude towards the tourist industry; and those involved in tourism should show a greater sensitivity towards the community in which they operate."

If tourism holds any dangers for Welsh culture and identity, it is mainly because the Welsh people themselves have not grasped the opportunities which the industry offers Wales, and have not stamped sufficiently boldly or confidently a Welsh image onto the tourist industry in Wales."

We want to see a positive approach to tourism. We are determined to make tourism a servant of the whole community and see that it grows in harmony side by side with that community. We want to project Wales abroad as a happy and welcoming Wales and we want to bring in jobs and money. Those things can be done, but they need to be done by way of a real strategy and in harmony with the public and private sectors.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): The hon. Gentleman will be very well aware that we are in the course of preparing a response to the Select Committee report. Therefore, I am very much inhibited, even in interventions like this. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I have listened carefully to what he has said and that an appropriate response to the report will be given in due course.

Mr. Wigley: I had almost concluded my speech, but I am grateful to the Minister for his comments. We look forward to an early response from the Welsh Office and I hope that we can move forward along the positive lines that I have outlined. I say that because of the importance of the industry.

12.27 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Welsh Office in his new role and wish him continued success in his career. I know that he will bring great thought and investigation to the tourist industry. I also welcome the maiden speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and the maiden speeches by the hon. Members for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and for Southport (Mr. Fearn). I am delighted that they chose the opportunity of a tourism debate to make those speeches. It is a daunting occasion for any hon. Member, and to have chosen the subject of the fastest growth industry in Britain is a tribute to that industry, and shows that these hon. Members are far-sighted and will go far in the House. Of those hon. Members, I particularly single out the pleasure I have in welcoming my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale, who has been a close friend for a number of

years. I look forward to assisting him and to developing our relationship in north Yorkshire to the mutual benefit of our constituents.

It is significant that the first major debate after the Gracious Speech is on the subject of tourism. I noted that my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State was present on the Front Bench for a time. I saw, from the records that his hobby is travelling. Nothing could be more apt.

I declare an interest as the parliamentary consultant to the largest independent consortium of hoteliers, Consort Hotels, and as a consultant to Interbuild Exhibitions Ltd. Incoming traffic to Britain held up well in 1986, despite many well-publicised, if short-term problems. We attracted 13.8 million overseas visitors, which is only slightly down on the previous year. Tourism earnings, of some £5.5 million, were an all-time record. These results, boosted by internal tourism, underline the resilience of this great growth industry.

I shall develop a number of themes, some of which have already been referred to, although the first, has not. There is a need to rationalise the 12 regional boards. When the 12 boards were set up following the Development of Tourism Act 1969, that appeared to be the right approach. We have now gone quite a way and there is a logical next step. As the tourism industry has gone into the portfolio of the Department of Employment, the most logical and rational step is to redraw the boundaries and make the 12 regional boards coterminous with the eight Manpower Services Commission regions.

At the moment, there is conflict and difficulty between officials across the border. I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to investigate my suggestion as a means of ensuring the development of the employment potential, particularly for our youngsters in training and career prospects, then at an early stage. Furthermore, such a change will reduce the duplication of services — for example, the photographic libraries and literature that abound. Instead, new boards such as I suggest could concentrate more easily on the regions that they are developing. It will give a greater career structure within the tourism industry.

There is also a conflict within the English tourist board, which is both developing consultancy in competition with private consultants and passing judgment on those companies applying for grants. I am not suggesting that there are double standards, but it is peculiar that the same set of officials, or officials within the same building, are dealing with both matters. At an early stage, my hon. Friend the Minister needs to review and strip out that consultancy role so that the English tourist board can use its expertise truly to evaluate the grants that the Government and other bodies are giving.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend will be promoting facilities for the disabled. We need increased literature about the availability of sites and other schemes to help the disabled. I draw to his attention not only those who are wheelchair bound but those who are disabled in other ways, particularly the blind and the deaf. Many tourist attractions do not yet have tactile signs. Those who go blind at an early age can learn braille fairly easily, but those who become partially sighted or blind later in life find it difficult to learn. Tactile signs at tourist sites will enable them to enjoy the facility more. The ring and loop system to help the deaf has been developed at a number

of sites. Perhaps my hon. Friend will consider funding, and gives speeches along the lines of that which he made this morning, to assist such people.

Little reference has so far been made in this important debate to EEC development, and here I praise the work of the MEP for York, Edward McMillan-Scott, in trying to achieve better co-ordination for EEC visitors. Of particular importance is a common health treatment for EEC visitors. We expect this when we go to other EEC states. Instead of all the E11 forms, which take two months to apply for in Belgium, Luxembourg and other EEC countries, we should have a common standing. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will hold discussions with Ministers at the DHSS to improve the common policy. Within that EEC context, the right to work in other states is important. There must be equity, but certain states demand nonsensical qualifications so that British travel guides and tour operators are obstructed in their desire to take parties to certain European states simply because of a little piece of paper. That is not reasonable and fair competition. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bang the drum at the first EEC ministerial round under the tourism aegis.

Tourist information centres are being developed and over the past two Governments it has been fascinating to see how far they have come on stream. However, I still appeal for wider hours. I was utterly amazed when I partnered the former Under-Secretary of State on a visit to the Tower of London and the adjoining area to the east of the city to find that the tourist information centre was closed over Easter for five or six months. Hours need to be reviewed and the tourism strategy for London referred to by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) this week is a move in the right direction.

We need assistance with the Welsh language with regard to tourism. It has been delightful to see my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Welsh Office present on the Front Bench throughout the debate. I was also pleased to hear the contribution made by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). However, languages within the EEC must be developed in tourism. It is very sad that we do not have a little display of the flags of the appropriate countries.

Local authorities can have a beneficial effect on tourism. There should be a partnership. Those of us who have visited York will be aware that it is a major tourist centre. York contains the world-famous York minster and its surrounding buildings such as St. William's college. There is the castle museum and the national railway museum. There are also historic livery halls, which are often not mentioned in York or London, such as the Merchant Adventurer's and Merchant Tailors. There is the Yorkshire museum and the city art gallery. There are also newer developments such as the Jorvik centre and the Friargate wax works. Plans were announced only this week for a new public museum to display the crafts involved in the making of confectionery, York's most important industry. Today, York launches the early music festival. Within the proximity of York there is the important museum of farming and such historic sights as Castle Howard.

It is therefore sad that the tourist industry in this great city is denigrated by the ill-informed Socialist leaders of York city council. Instead of appointing key executives to roles as conference officer, public relations officer and

upgrading the posts of tourism officer, they have either left those posts vacant during their tenure as council leaders or they have ignored this great industry.

Tourism is an important employer. It now supports more than 8,000 people in York and has created between 50,000 and 60,000 new jobs nationally. At a local level, the York city council Socialists refuse to build a constructive dialogue with the private sector as has been so successfully achieved in Chester, Plymouth and Southampton. Those centres have developed marketing consortia to develop tourism. Therefore, after so many hiccups, I am delighted that the York chamber of trade announced yesterday that it would go it alone. It has already raised £70,000 for a York visitor and conference bureau. I wish it well, because the careful development of York is so vital and its proper promotion is long overdue.

My hon. Friend the Minister referred to one of the S's as the S of signposting and he announced that 2,000 attractions have now been designated by the new boards. Much more must be done, especially on our motorways. Some 71 per cent. of respondents in the London tourist board survey said that they wanted better signposting. I understand that there is a thorn in the side which is causing problems. The Minister did not refer to this in his brief, but the problem lies with deemed consent. That is a good example of red tape. The draft regulations to relax the control of off-highway advertisement regulations were issued by the Department of the Environment. The broad thrust of those regulations was that planning permission would no longer be required where prescribed limitations were followed. That would have been an example of cutting away immediately at red tape for the hotel and catering and related industries. Unfortunately, the draft regulations are still wallowing in relevant Departments. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State urgently to take them down from the shelf, brush them off and implement them as soon as possible.

What is being done to encourage the conference market? I have heard little so far today about that, and yet the market is worth over £400 million annually in England alone. I should like to see a paper produced that is devoted to the conference industry in Britain to ascertain what can be done by local authorities, regional authorities and central Government.

There is a need for more two-star accommodation. An increasing number of hotel beds are being used to house homeless families and there is no cheap hotel accommodation available, for example, in the Waterloo area. It was a folly to fail to allow new hotel accommodation to be built on the Coin street site. If London is to remain the gateway to the United Kingdom and to retain world potential, there must be certain incentives to ensure that more two-star accommodation is provided. For example, the possibility of free rates being offered to hoteliers who are prepared to provide purpose-built two-star accommodation should be investigated. The availability of such accommodation will encourage more families to visit London and other major cities.

It is nonsensical to equate service with servility. We have heard less of that argument from Opposition Members today and I would welcome them to participate in the work of the all-party tourism committee. I had the honour to be the committee's honorary secretary during the previous Parliament. The committee would welcome contributions from members of all political parties.

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

Tourism is a great industry and more career guidance and the co-ordination of Government Departments and agencies will see the proper development and maximisation of employment opportunities. I thank the leaders of the industry and give them the assurance—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will make this clear—that we shall not intervene unnecessarily. We shall provide the carrot and not the stick.

12.43 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak relatively early in the Session, thus giving me the opportunity to pay tribute at an early stage to my predecessor, Leo Abse. During his 30 years in Parliament, he spent most of his time representing Pontypool and not the new-named constituency of Torfaen. When I talk to hon. Members, they recognise the constituency by the Member who represented it for 30 years and not by its name.

There is no doubt that Les Abse was a colourful and effective Member of this place. There is no doubt also that he was a tourist—tourism is the theme of the debate—of the psychic if not of places. The psycho-analysis that he made of individual Members could be teasing or serious and the trick was to discover its nature.

The most important contribution that Leo Abse made to the House and to the country was his sponsorship of many private Members' Bills. These Bills covered many subjects, including adoption and illegitimacy. By this means he made his impact on the country generally and on those who benefited from it, and there were many hundreds of thousands who did. He made it possible for the House to enact legislation without Bills being sponsored by the Executive.

There is no doubt that Leo Abse will be remembered as a good constituency Member in the best sense of that term. Those of us who lived in the constituency when he was its Member will recall things that will not be remembered by right hon and hon. Members. He brought many industries to the eastern valley of Gwent and many jobs as well. Leo Abse will undoubtedly be remembered by his colleagues in this place and by the many thousands of people in Torfaen.

I understand that in a maiden speech it is customary to describe one's constituency. I am the only Member of this new Parliament from the south Wales valleys who will be making a maiden speech. My constituency lies in the most eastern of the south Wales valleys. Tourists from all over England pass through it on their way to other parts of Wales. The character of the northern and middle parts of the valley is the same as that of all the other south Wales valleys. Where else could towns and villages like Blaenavon, Abersychan, Pontnewynydd and Pontypool be but in the south of Wales?

However, in the south of the constituency lies the only new town in the Principality. Many people from the valleys have gone to live there but during the past 40 years it has developed a separate identity. The political ideas that are prevalent in the valleys are as much a part of the new town as they are of the upper and middle parts of my constituency.

South Wales is thought to be the place where one can hear good choirs, or watch good rugby or see the Welsh

life of the chapels, but the valleys are also committed to democratic Socialism. It was firmly based on the belief that the only way in which working men and women in south Wales could emancipate themselves from the constraints of earlier days—when they lived in houses for which they had to pay a rack rent, when young, talented men had to go down the pits instead of to university, when health care, for what it was worth, had to be bought and when old people lingered on without dignity or pride—was by taking collective action through the ballot box so that their Members of Parliament could change the law and society, with the result that the lot of those who lived in south Wales and elsewhere could be improved.

That is why the achievements of the 1945 to 1951 Government are precious to south Wales. They are particularly precious to the new Members of Parliament who were born between 1945 and 1949. In those years the National Health Service was established and the education system was developed. People such as me, the son of a miner, were able to develop their talents as fully as possible because of the opportunities that were granted to us by that Government.

During the last few years my new colleagues and I have found that the commitment to the welfare state and equal opportunities—a commitment that has developed in all parties during the last 40 years—has fast been eroded. The proposals in the Gracious Speech will erode them even further. In my constituency, 2,000 people are homeless and waiting for houses. The housing proposals in the Gracious Speech hold out no hope for them. The problems for the schools will not be lessened, either.

Thirty years ago my predecessor made his maiden speech on comprehensive education. Unquestionably there have been improvements since then. However, he said then that there were not enough books, that classes were too large and that opportunities did not exist. The opportunities for education that will be offered by the proposals in the Gracious Speech will not help the people of my constituency.

My constituency will not be helped by the curiously misnamed community charge because that will put an immense financial burden upon people in areas such as mine. Of course, worst of all is the fact there are 6,000 people out of work in Torfaen, 2,000 of whom are under 25, and the only hope that they have been given—it is hope that they want as much as jobs—is schemes, more schemes and nothing but schemes.

A week ago today my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said that the problems of the south Wales valleys were the same as those of the great cities. Of that there can be no doubt. The poverty and hopelessness that we can see in the cities and the valleys is the same wherever one travels around the country. We have lost rate support grant in the valleys the same as the cities. However, one of the worst things that we can see is that the present Administration have no conception of how ordinary people live, whether it be in the cities or in the valleys of south Wales. That is the greatest problem that we have seen in the past and will see over the next four years.

Britain is great, but one does not define greatness by waving flags. A country's greatness can be seen when one looks at the way in which it treats its citizens. It can be seen in the way in which it recognises that there is a richness and diversity among the regions. My fear is that the different regions will be ignored, just as we have seen over the past

few years and since the general election. If regions such as mine are ignored, they are ignored at the Government's peril because there is no doubt that the people in my valley, throughout south Wales and in other areas that loyally supported my party in the election will regard it as an insult if they are ignored in the way in which they have been over the past eight years. I hope that they are not because if they are, the politics of this country will be less than wholesome and the Government will be less than truly effective.

12.52 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): We have all been privileged to listen to an outstanding maiden speech from the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy). He shows that the tradition of oratory that emanates from the Welsh valleys and which was so ably manifested by his distinguished predecessor has not been lost and I am confident that he will have a distinguished future in the House.

One of the things that has been so rewarding about attending this debate has been the extraordinarily high standard of maiden speeches and the large number of hon. Members who have chosen the subject of tourism for their maiden speeches. That is a great encouragement to all of us who regard tourism as extremely important for the development of our nation.

Tourism has been one of the great success stories of the nation and our Government. In that connection we owe a debt of gratitude to the previous Secretary of State and his team, particularly the former Minister of State my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), for all the work that he did to promote tourism and its success in the United Kingdom. Having heard my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) this morning I am confident that he will continue that work in a most distinguished way.

Some of my colleagues have been unable to be present today. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) has asked to be associated with what I say because we try to work very much as a team in representing the interests of the town. In addition, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), who, unfortunately, has the sad duty of attending a funeral, has asked me to say a few words on his behalf. He would like me to say that he is particularly grateful for the support he is receiving in Thanet from the English tourist board and the support it is giving to the revitalisation of tourism in the area. He stressed the need to attract all-weather leisure facilities and new hotel accommodation and we hope that the Government's seed corn finance will provide that for his constituency as well as many other constituencies.

In saying that tourism has been a great success it is worth recording that all the current surveys of our domestic market are extremely optimistic for this season and future seasons. Bearing in mind the difficulties in the past, particularly last year's terrorist threats which at least for a limited period affected the market badly, this is a great tribute to all those involved in the industry and particularly to the work of the British Tourist Authority which does such marvellous work promoting us overseas. I hope that the recent strengthening of the American dollar will not lead to a diminution of the resources available to the BTA for its work in the United States or for its other

excellent work in other parts, particularly the far east, to broaden the base from which tourists are drawn from overseas to the United Kingdom.

Several hon. Members referred to signposting, and it is certainly my experience, as it is that of others, that the responses, particularly from county councils, have been extremely patchy. Therefore, I hope that in addition to talking to his colleagues at the Department of Transport, my hon. Friend the Minister will talk to his colleagues at the Department of the Environment and stimulate a greater degree of urgency in this respect from some county council highway authorities.

I, too, welcome the new measures which the Government propose to take to relax the licensing laws. Visitors from overseas undoubtedly find our licensing laws both perplexing and frustrating. Indeed, many of our citizens who have become accustomed to wandering off a hot beach on a summer's afternoon and getting a pint of beer or some other refreshing beverage find it puzzling that they cannot do the same in Bournemouth. Therefore, I hope that we can speed the amending legislation through the House with the least possible difficulty.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister that cleanliness is extremely important and I support his initiatives. We still have something of a problem with beach pollution. Happily that does not apply to my constituency where all the beaches have been given a clean bill of health under EEC regulations, but of the 180 beaches that have been checked in the past year, 38 per cent. did not meet the required standard. That cannot be acceptable. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) stated during the last Session that all beaches in Britain should reach the minimum standards by the end of the century. That is too long to wait. We need an urgent programme to improve those standards.

The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) suggested for some reason which escapes me that the privatisation of water would adversely affect beach pollution. As he may realise when he studies the Government's proposals a little more carefully, responsibility for that sort of activity will be retained by a new rivers authority, so that would not apply. Nevertheless, I cannot understand why he thinks that it should apply, even if such activities were transferred elsewhere. In Bournemouth we have been ably served by the private Bournemouth and district water company for more than 103 years and it has consistently maintained the highest standards of service and supply.

I should like now to refer to planning and to the attitude of many town planning authorities. Other Members have mentioned the shortage of hotel accommodation that may arise in London. Indeed the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) elicited a reply from my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen in the previous Parliament suggesting that the Government have considered that a shortage may arise in the not too distant future. Certainly the English tourist board believes that there is a shortage already in certain categories of hotels, especially those of the two star and three star category.

I hope that the Minister will make representations to his colleagues at the Department of Environment regarding the attitude of some local authorities, in particular the London boroughs of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea and Camden. Those boroughs have a restrictive attitude towards the granting of consent

[Mr. John Butterfill]

for new hotels. However, it is pleasing to note that Westminster has recently designated some new specific areas where planning permission may be given, notably St. George's hospital at Hyde Park and the former Crown Agents building at Millbank. However, such developments do not go far enough to meet the problem.

Indeed, the problem exists not only in London, but in those local authorities surrounding London, especially in Surrey, Buckinghamshire and the lush home counties that wish to restrict the growth of hotels in their areas. I hope that we shall be able to persuade them that they too have an important role to play in the provision of accommodation for visitors and indeed accommodation for our citizens who wish to travel to other parts of the United Kingdom.

We must consider the question of the taxation of holiday flat operators. The self-catering holiday sector is an important and growing sector. It is especially important because it provides holiday accommodation for families on relatively low incomes. Perhaps it is for that reason that it is becoming such a popular and rapidly growing sector. However, unfortunately, the tax treatment of this sector is still far from satisfactory. Prior to a case in 1983-84 that was brought by the Inland Revenue in the High Court, the operators of such accommodation were treated as business people under case 1 of schedule D. Following that case, however, they were relegated to case 6, schedule D. That decision severely affected their operations. I am glad to note that the Government recognised the problem and in the Finance Act 1984 they brought forward some amending legislation that has gone some way to alleviating the operator's position. However, the situation is still not entirely satisfactory, and I hope that, at some point in the near future, it may be possible to further to amend the law to meet the representations that are now being ably made by the British Federation of Hotel, Guest House and Self-Catering Associations.

I am also rather concerned about the proposed VAT regulations that we will no doubt return to when we discuss the forthcoming Finance Bill. I know that there is an obligation under EEC law to give effect to article 26 of the sixth directive. That will mean imposing VAT on the margins of tour operators. However, I have no doubt that, if it is done as presently proposed, it will damage the interests of certain operators in the United Kingdom, especially conference organisers and those who operate language courses, which are valuable sources of the revenue and tourism.

I was grateful that, during the final sittings of the Finance Committee in the previous Parliament, my hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) gave the assurance that he would consider what was being done in West Germany in this respect. In West Germany they have been able to meet the requirements of the sixth directive without undue disadvantage to their domestic operations. I hope that we can at least do the same.

I was particularly gratified that we were able last year to give an extra £5 million to the ETB and BTA, which have done marvellous work. We should support the work of the ETB and its "Vision for England" as it develops and markets a strategy for the industry.

The board and the authority are encouraging the provision of private capital. The hon. Member for

Huddersfield called for more Government investment, but it is important to recognise that a relatively small amount of Government money can generate large amounts of private money. That is happening in the United Kingdom and in other places, including the United States. I hope that we shall encourage that pattern.

The ETB envisages the generation of £3 billion to £4 billion of private investment and another 250,000 jobs by the 1990s from the presently available resources. That would be a marvellous return on capital employed and I am sure that it is the right way to proceed.

I was pleased to note the recent announcement of an extension of the community programme which will continue to play an increasingly important role in tourism. The new premium that will be available to participants in addition to their social security payments will make the programme much more attractive and persuade people that it is worth their while to get involved. It is encouraging that there are to be 2,500 more places with a projection of up to 5,000 more within a year.

I end by paying tribute to what the Department of Employment is doing on education and its role in the pick-up scheme. In May this year there was a marvellous announcement that a further £70,000 was to be provided in my constituency for the pick-up scheme which involves four companies and four colleges of education. If we are to provide adequately for the needs of the industry and are to compete internationally there must be more education and better training for those involved in tourism. We have been uniquely successful and if we promote training we shall continue to be successful. I congratulate the Government on their initiatives.

1.8 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) on his thoughtful and constructive maiden speech, which he delivered with great confidence. I am sure that we shall hear many more such contributions from him in the years ahead.

The debate has been marked by a series of excellent maiden speeches and by contributions from hon. Members representing varied parts of the United Kingdom. The different natures of those constituencies illustrate the importance of tourism. All those areas have tourism potential, which demonstrates the tremendous asset that tourism represents.

Before the general election the local press in my constituency said that I had had a clash with the previous Minister responsible for tourism, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), who seemed to have the impression that I did not regard tourism as an important industry. That is not so. I accept that tourism is an important growth area for jobs and is important to our economy, but that does not prevent my having some reservations and criticisms to make. I have one important thing to say to the Government. It is no use throwing the fact that this is an area of great growth at us time after time. We accept that it is. At the same time, it cannot possibly deal with the large number of people who have lost their jobs in the manufacturing industries. That is what causes many of my hon. Friends and me concern.

The Minister, who represents a constituency adjacent to mine, knows that in the north-west we have lost 32 per cent. of the jobs in manufacturing industry since 1979—a total of more than 330,000. Whatever growth there is in

tourism will not absorb anything but a fraction of that number. That is not to say that we do not want tourism to grow, both for the benefit of jobs and for the economy as a whole.

Another area of concern, which I mentioned in an earlier intervention, has to do with conditions of pay. My hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) referred to this in his speech and gave some information to back up the concern that we feel. I am not saying that there are no well-paid jobs, with good conditions, in the tourism industry. I accept that the majority of them may well fall into that category, but there is cause for concern, and a high percentage of jobs have poor pay and conditions. I do not wish to develop that aspect today, but if the Minister disputes it, to support my point I shall supply information from my union — the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union — which covers many people in the industry.

The problems of benefit for seasonal employees were mentioned earlier in the debate — particularly the problems of those who have been in such employment for three years. The Government must give serious consideration to the present high unemployment and the position of seasonal employers. The present regulations, which were drawn up to determine the benefit of seasonal workers, conditions which no longer apply, and many such workers are being unfairly penalised when they find themselves out of work, out of season. That problem needs to be examined.

The Minister represents a constituency that is adjacent to mine, and so did his predecessor. The Government Chief Whip, the right hon. and learned Member for Ribbles Valley (Mr. Waddington), also represents a constituency that touches Burnley, so north-east Lancashire hopes that the Government will look favourably on the growth of tourism there. It is important that areas such as Bradford and north-east Lancashire, which, 20 years ago, could not perhaps have been imagined by any of us as considering tourism potential, should have such growth. We have tremendous potential. The Minister mentioned Pendle witches and the heritage and craft industries that make those witches for sale for cars and windows. In north-east Lancashire we have areas of pleasant and attractive scenery. Many of them, if they were in other parts of the country, such as the south-west, would have coaches run through them — Cliviger gorge through the Trough of Bowland, the Nick of Pendle, to Skipton, Settle and the Thursdon valley, through to Hardcastle Craggs and into Yorkshire. Those are all areas of tremendous attraction and potential. In Burnley we have Gawthorpe hall, which is in the ownership by the National Trust, which is renovating it and will reopen it in the near future. The Great Barn has been developed there to add to the attractions of that National Trust property. Burnley council also owns Towneley hall, which houses the museum and art gallery and attracts many visitors every year. The Minister has visited the Mechanics, which the council opened in August last year.

Many industrial towns are developing projects along the lines of the Queen street mill in Burnley, which was opened on St. George's day last year. That shows the traditional steam-powered Lancashire looms and the original boiler running under exactly the same conditions as prevailed 100 years ago. Other Lancashire and Yorkshire towns have tremendous potential for showing younger people and visitors where the industrial

revolution took place and how Britain's wealth was made in the last century. We must encourage the growth of such attractions, and we must have accommodation and other facilities. It is no good developing places that people can visit if we do not have the infrastructure and the other requirements that are necessary to sustain those attractions.

Additionality causes many problems in some areas. It is not unique to tourism, but it can become a problem because of the attitude of the Government. It is time that the Government changed their policy in relation to that. The Minister knows about the problem of additionality and I hope that he will bear the point in mind.

An anomaly that arises in funding provided by section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 is that although assistance can be given to a council if it is developing a project by itself, it will receive no assistance for a project in which it is only partly involved. That is a nonsensical anomaly. The Government must take a commonsense approach to the problem.

Another cause for concern to those involved in the tourist industry — the North-West tourist board is worried about this — is the privatisation of the water industry. I hope that in the disposal of land owned by the water authorities — this is being dealt with separately from the privatisation of water — public access and use will not be restricted as a result of change of ownership.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the massive investment that will be necessary if we are to clean up our beaches. When, towards the end of the previous Session, the Select Committee on the Environment was examining the problem of the pollution of rivers and estuaries, it was repeatedly and forcefully told by water authorities that they already find it difficult to invest the necessary amount of money to clear up pollution on beaches. They accept that a problem exists and the need to deal with it, but to do so they must take money from their other programmes, which means that that work will get further behind. That is certainly a major worry for the North-West water authority, which has the most acute financial problems of all the water authorities.

One must accept that the investment needed to deal with the problem of pollution on the beaches will not earn more profit. Privatisation is all about someone being able to make a profit out of the industry that is privatised. Therefore, it is fair to say that investment that is necessary to deal with a problem that cannot show an immediate return in cash terms is likely to be low in the order of priorities. I am opposed to privatisation, but I recognise that the Government have their majority and are determined to force it through. If it goes through, it must be tied with clear requirements on the privatised industry to deal with those important and pressing problems.

The English tourist board's annual report for the year ending 31 March 1986 states:

"A partnership between local authorities, the private sector and the English Tourist Board is the most effective way of accelerating tourism development."

The report also states that the single most important problem facing the development of the tourist industry is the difficulty of obtaining venture capital from insurance companies, pension funds and the like in the place of low-risk capital supported by local government guarantees.

It is worrying that if the tourism industry cannot attract the right type of long-term capital there may not be investment in the most important things if the industry is

[Mr. Peter Pike]

to be sustained and developed. Tourism is an excellent opportunity for the private sector, local government and central Government to work together to get the maximum benefit. If we are to achieve that, attitudes and practices in tourism need to change. Private investors need to look increasingly from short-term to long-term investment. The Government must be prepared to follow up their limited successes with more far-reaching support to attract more capital into tourism. They must also increase Government funding and resources.

Local authorities need great freedom from financial constraints, so that they can promote tourism. It is no good saying that local government should spend more money on tourism if all the time it has to consider the difficulties increasingly placed on it by the Government of maintaining even the essential basic requirements to meet the needs of the community. That is very much the case now.

Tourism is a joint venture, but an increased combination of all the points that I have made is needed if we are to achieve the success that we all wish. It can play a tremendous role in the future of the economy. Therefore, the Government must take the lead more positively and enable local government to play its full part, which means removing some of the constraints on it. They must give the incentive to the private sector to make its investment and play its part in achieving that improvement in our economy and the creation of much-needed new jobs.

1.18 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Burnley, (Mr. Pike) whose thoughtful and forceful speech betokens his sincere concern about and interest in tourism and its contribution to the economy and the employment of so many people.

It has been characteristic of the debate that the quality of the speeches that we have heard and the contributions to the subject have been of the highest possible order. Speeches have been made by hon. Members from many parts of the United Kingdom. I recall with much enthusiasm the speech by the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder), who spoke so eloquently about the contribution of tourism to the Province of Northern Ireland. He painted a picture that showed a different side of that unhappy Province and the people who live there. It was a most worthy and outstanding contribution.

We heard two speeches by hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies and they were most commendable and informative. My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) made a strong speech and in it I recognised his special knowledge of the subject. I am aware of the work that he does for tourism and for related subjects. It would not be right for me to continue without paying tribute to those hon. Members who made their maiden speeches in this debate. They chose a gentle House in which to make them and by so doing they were able to make a contribution to debate that is most interesting and constructive.

It is no historical accident that those who make maiden speeches are heard in silence. Such a speech is a new Member's opportunity to introduce himself to the House, to pay tribute to his predecessor and to say something

about his constituency. The maiden speeches in this debate were constructive and useful and I am glad to pay my tribute to them.

I am delighted to see on the Government Front Bench my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean). His elevation to high office seems to know no bounds. He was appointed an Assistant Whip just a few days ago and now he sits on the Front Bench. Where will he be before this Parliament is out?

In terms of tourism, the House will recognise that I speak with particular reference to London and especially the City of Westminster which has a special responsibility for tourism. Tourism is a major industry, generating an estimated 200,000 jobs Londonwide. From the viewpoint of London, tourism is a business and a form of employment. Consequently, tourism is a major subject for London.

In 1986, domestic and overseas visitors to London are estimated to have spent about £4,700 million, including fares paid to London-based carriers. That is a formidable sum and the expenditure is highly concentrated in central London. Westminster, the constituency that I have the honour to represent, is the hub of the London tourist industry. It contains nine of London's 12 top tourist sites, seven of the 10 shopping streets most visited by overseas tourists and 45 per cent. of all London's hotel bedspaces.

About 12 per cent. of all the jobs in the City of Westminster are in the hotel and catering trades and many more jobs in retailing, travel and entertainment are wholly or partly dependent on tourist spending. The number of tourists, tourist spending and employment are all forecast to grow into the 1990s. Consultants to the London tourist board recently estimated that as many as 50,000 new jobs could be created in London alone by the early 1990s. All but a small proportion of this growth will be generated by increased spending by overseas visitors. Therefore, the importance of the tourist industry to the economy of the United Kingdom is beyond doubt.

Many advantages are to be gained by the City of Westminster and by London by ensuring that any potential growth in tourism is realised. Tourism and leisure make up one of the few sectors of the economy in which the number of manual jobs has risen in recent years. Therefore, it is a good sector for job creation, especially, in London, for the young, the unskilled and the unemployed. Because of the importance of the tourist market to the City of Westminster business community, it is also a sector of economic growth generally.

Numerous forecasts of growth in tourist numbers and spending are currently available. There are, however, two important qualifications, of which I am particularly anxious that my hon. Friend the Minister should take note. The first is that tourism is a strongly cyclical industry, which is particularly sensitive to fluctuations in exchange rates. The fast growth of tourism experienced since 1981 closely reflects the fall in the value of the pound against other major currencies in the same period. Similarly, the fall in growth experienced in 1986 reflected not only American fears about terrorism in Europe and the consequences of the Chernobyl incident, but also the fall of the dollar against sterling which occurred in that year.

Therefore, it would be inadvisable to rely on forecasts of future growth based on the trends of the past five years, during which the industry's performance has been greatly enhanced by favourable exchange rate shifts. Future

growth is likely to match that of the recent past only if the value of the pound continues to fall against other major currencies. This is a point of importance to the Treasury and its calculation of, and involvement in, the value of the pound.

My second caveat attaching to forecasts of increases in tourist numbers is the availability of hotel spaces to accommodate the growth. Already in this debate, my hon. Friend the Member for York has referred to the necessity for hotel accommodation. If the current projections are to be realised, London may face a shortage of hotel spaces in the early or mid 1990s unless there are substantial additions to the existing hotel stock. It is very important to consider that aspect, particularly on a Londonwide basis. Between 16,000 to 28,000 additional hotel rooms could be required by the early 1990s.

If this rate of accommodation is to be found, there will have to be a dramatic change in the attitude of London borough planning departments. I am sorry to introduce a political note, but it is a matter of record that the Socialist-controlled boroughs in London seem particularly reluctant to grant planning permission for hotels in their districts. This is both foolhardy and unnecessary, first because it is restricting the growth of an industry that contributes dramatically and positively to the economy of the United Kingdom and secondly because it is denying employment opportunities that the same London boroughs claim to be high on the order of priorities for their political endeavours.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to look carefully at planning applications, particularly in those boroughs where there is a decided reluctance to be positive, to see what can be done. Unless we provide growth in bedspaces, the potential in this sector will not be realised.

Other aspects of tourism need to be borne in mind. There is a need for a balanced approach. With the city of Westminster and its central role in London tourism, it is necessary to consider what is to be done for the future planning of tourism. Fortunately, London now has its own tourist board, which is most energetically managed by a splendid committee under an innovative managing director. It is considering the whole concept of tourism and making positive proposals for the management of the tourist business. When considering the availability of bedspaces in hotels, it is important to consider London as a whole and so discover how visitors coming to London can find opportunities to visit the centre of London where the major attractions are to be found and other parts of London such as Greenwich where there are many other worthy attractions and places of interest.

Tourism can create problems as well as opportunities. In the city of Westminster there are many problems including the damage to the environment, the loss of local shopping, noise, litter and even prostitution brought about by the large number of persons attracted to the centre of London from within the United Kingdom and overseas. There is congestion in the summer months including the particular problem of tourist coaches. It will be necessary to plan where those coaches can go. The notion that they can simply disgorge their visitors outside Madam Tussauds and then trundle off to a back street and remain there for an hour or so or even longer is simply not acceptable. That creates immense damage to the environment of the residential community and the existing

commercial community. Planning for coach traffic and coach parking is a major problem which must be tackled with innovation and imagination as a matter of urgency.

In making reference to the problem of visitors and the use of coaches, I want to refer to the problem facing hon. Members in the underground passage between the Norman Shaw outbuildings and the House. The Serjeant at Arms is ever mindful of the needs and interests of hon. Members. However, the day cannot be far off when we must find a realistic alternative to the way hon. Members reach this House from the Norman Shaw buildings. It is fun to know that large numbers of foreign visitors are with us and perhaps even visit this very House. However, having to fight one's way through a gaggle of French schoolchildren to reach the Chamber or to vote seems, for the mother of Parliaments, to be a burden that we could well do without. We must bring early thinking to the problem of managing foot traffic for hon. Members between the various buildings of the House and the Chamber. I am sure that solutions can be found if we set to work with a will.

Congestion in the summer months is a great problem in the city of Westminster. That is also true of the underground system. I pay tribute to London Regional Transport which has brought forward a number of exciting plans for the development of its services. We are indeed fortunate to have under the chairmanship of Sir Keith Bright and his board, people with imagination and will determined to find ways of managing the huge number of visitors coming to the centre of London.

There are pressures around main attractions that can damage both the character and principal function of those attractions. For example, across the road from the Chamber there is Westminster Abbey and the main art galleries. It is now a formidable problem to control the movement of so many people around those buildings and galleries. My constituents constantly complain about the problem caused by the number of people visiting Madam Tussauds, one of the most popular tourist attractions in the country, let alone the city of London. I recently asked the chief executive of the City of Westminster to look carefully with all interested agencies into the way in which we manage the number of people visiting that important institution. We do not want those people to go away. We want them to come. However, we want to manage their arrival, attendance and departure in such a way as not to destroy the very character of the institution and still less the lives of those who live about the institution and others with commercial interests separate from the tourist industry.

It is so important to plan and to plan in detail. If we are to make the success of tourism that we want, we must address ourselves to these practical problems and find the best solutions.

Another factor that arises from mass tourism in the City of Westminster is the loss of housing through unauthorised conversions to hotels and short-term lets. Immense problems are caused to the remaining residents in blocks of flats when there are short-term lets. They find that the quiet enjoyment of the property and the services for which they pay is not treated with the respect that they expect and want. We must think of ways of dealing with that problem, especially in the City of Westminster.

The City of Westminster has to bear additional costs for cleansing, litter collection and other related matters. As the historic centre of London, it has to bear a special

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responsibility. During the previous Session I had the honour and pleasure of introducing the City of Westminster Bill, which was designed specifically to help deal with the litter problem. I am glad that the Bill is now to be considered in Committee and I look forward to its enactment. I am sure that it will make a contribution to dealing with street litter. I accept that it will not provide a complete solution, but I am sure that it will make an important contribution.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will make known to our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment the need to bear in mind the direct costs that are faced by the City of Westminster in the change that is to be made to local authority financing and local authority expenditure. If the City of Westminster is to bear the awesome burden of being the heart of tourism for London and the country as a whole, the special costs that devolve upon its commercial and domestic ratepayers as a consequence must obtain some relief and support from elsewhere in the economy. These are factors that the City of Westminster has particularly to take into account and I am glad to present them to the House today as part of the policy of considering future tourist growth.

The City of Westminster has a policy to pursue a planning strategy for tourism. First, it seeks the promotion of those elements within the tourist industry in which Westminster has a truly central role and which offer the greatest benefit to the Westminster economy while maintaining continuity for businesses in the area which depend upon tourism for a significant part of their income. The City of Westminster seeks to plan with the Westminster chamber of commerce and industry, the police, the London tourist board and all other relevant services and authorities.

Secondly, the city seeks the reinforcement of London's role in tourism by making tourists' visits to Westminster more rewarding and satisfying experiences. We clearly want overseas visitors to return to London and the United Kingdom, bringing with them important foreign currency that contributes so much to our economy.

Thirdly, it is important to protect communities from the detrimental or destabilising effect of tourism. That is important if we are to retain a residential community that can live with some quiet enjoyment of life in the centre of London.

Fourthly, the city believes in co-operation with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and Government Departments generally as well as with the London tourist board and other London boroughs in meeting London's tourism needs and achieving the optimum distribution of new tourism development across the capital.

As for the work of the London tourist board and the action that it recommends, I support entirely the Conservative party's manifesto commitment. I hope that a Bill to relax the licensing hours will soon follow it. A relaxation of the licensing hours for the centre of London is long overdue. It is extraordinary that the needs of the first world war are still provided for in legislation. That legislation has an impact on the freedom of choice for British citizens, and it imposes restrictions, too, on tourism, a developing industry. The centre of London

should be able to operate flexible licensing hours. The sooner that commitment becomes an Act of Parliament the better it will be.

The dissemination of information for use by both visitors and Londoners is vital. If tourism is to be part of the life of the residential community it is essential to provide information for the visitor. Earlier in the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for York referred to a tourist information office that had been closed for several months. Failure of that kind does not promote tourism. It frustrates everyone—residents and visitors alike.

I hope that we shall have the courage and the good sense during the lifetime of this Parliament to consider the iniquities of the Shops Act 1950. It is absurd that in this age people cannot choose when they should go shopping, and where. Visitors and ordinary members of the public want to be able to shop in the city of Westminster whenever and wherever they like. When I visit Queensway in Bayswater, which is in my constituency, the place never seems to close; it is open 24 hours of the day, every day of the year, because of the cosmopolitan nature of the community. Archaic legal restrictions help neither tourism nor the residential community to enjoy the freedom of opportunity that they want.

I give every encouragement to the adequate cleansing of streets and to the keeping of litter away from public buildings and the streets. I support in particular anti-litter campaigns. The best way to promote a litter-free environment is for the public as well as for the commercial community and retailers to be directly involved in removing litter from their immediate environment. The City of Westminster has pioneered exciting campaigns. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) is in his seat. The previously Conservative-controlled council of Hammersmith and Fulham contributed to the anti-litter campaigns that did so much to improve his constituency.

As for the contribution of other services to life in the City of Westminster, the arrival of the wheel clamp was deemed at first to be a boon. At first it was used with great common sense and sensitivity by the police. The commercial community was therefore very glad about its introduction. The truly selfish motorist was penalised effectively. Recently, however, the use of the wheel clamp has ceased to be so popular because it is now used more indiscriminately.

Mr. Sheerman: It has been privatised.

Mr. Wheeler: I am told by the City of Westminster chamber of commerce that the commercial community in the City of Westminster can hardly function. Vehicles cannot be loaded or unloaded outside premises. It is therefore very difficult to manage the commercial life of the city. Furthermore, the domestic community finds that it is harried in the most unlikely places for the most unnecessary reasons. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) says that the service has been privatised and he is quite right. However, he is missing the point in that the wheel clamp is operated by the Metropolitan police who are in charge of the privatised wheel clamp unit. It is the Metropolitan police officer who makes the decision as to whether the clamp should be used. The position on wheel clamps now is that the Metropolitan police have lost all credibility and have lost the confidence of the public.

Westminster chamber of commerce said that the prevention of crime and the contribution of commerce to that is now in doubt because of resentment and because of the insensitive way in which the device is used. If we are to promote a commercial structure in the heart of London involving tourism and develop that in the way that we want, we have to ensure that all the services that help contribute to the life of Westminster, including the police, take into account the needs and interests of the commercial and domestic residential communities. When that balance changes, as it has done on this issue, it causes immense harm and resentment. There must be a restoration of that splendid British policing principle that minor, summary law is enforced with compassion, common sense and reasonableness. If we get back to that we shall solve one important problem.

Today's debate has been a most positive and encouraging one. We all want to see tourism grow and prosper and we want to deal with the consequences of that for our residential community who have to live with it. We want to find practical solutions to the problems that arise and we want to see a liberalisation of the law in appropriate areas to ensure that tourism will become a suitable part of our economic growth and success.

1.52 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): As the son of a disabled ex-miner and engineering factory worker, and having been born in a Durham mining village, I take great pride in the fact that I have the privilege of representing the constituency of Mansfield, with its similar mining traditions and people. I give notice to all in the House that I intend to work assiduously on behalf of my constituency and the people I represent. In that respect I note the promises made by the Minister in relation to future employment prospects for disabled people in the tourism industry.

As a newly elected Member, but not one unaware of the proceedings of the House, my understanding of parliamentary tradition is that I should mention my predecessor in my first speech in the Chamber. I do that willingly, reminding the House that I have succeeded Don Concannon, who served the Mansfield constituency for over 20 years and to whom I wish a long and healthy retirement. I shall also mention his predecessor, Bernard Taylor, now Lord Taylor of Mansfield, who will celebrate his 93rd birthday during the summer recess. He served the people of Mansfield in one distinguished capacity or another for more than 45 years, and I offer him my sincere thanks and best wishes.

Some people may wonder why I have chosen to make my first speech today during a debate on tourism. They might say to themselves, "What has Mansfield got to offer tourism and why should tourists go there?" The truth is that I have not chosen the topic, but the topic has chosen me, in the same way as 12 months ago, following my selection as the Labour candidate for Mansfield, the press and media chose wrongly to promote Mansfield in the public eye as a divided community. I am happy to report that, because of the intensity of their coverage, tourism developed considerably during that period, particularly among journalists. Much publicity was given to the area, and on one or two occasions even leading figures, mostly Government politicians, managed to find time to visit the constituency.

I thank the right hon. Members for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), the leaders of the minority alliance parties, for finding time to visit my constituency and, indeed, for once being as one on their commitment to, and argument about, holding a ballot in the area. I must admit that at the time I was not so sure whether it was altogether for the good, but, looking on the bright side, I managed to increase the Labour vote at the election. Indeed, the visit was so successful that my constituency Labour party general management committee asked me to write to the other political parties and ask them to book the same people again, especially the new Secretary of State for Energy, who had not been appointed at that time.

I am sure that we won the election because those visits enabled the Labour party to expose the real divisions that exist in the Mansfield community, its poverty and lack of provision, opportunity and services, especially among its old, very young and disadvantaged. In particular, I feel obliged to draw attention to the way in which the majority of people in the Mansfield community—its women—are discriminated against intolerably because of the Government's fiscal policies.

Of a population of 100,000, about 52,000 are female. Similar or worse figures apply in all the following areas: 5,500 are registered unemployed, which is triple the 1979 figure when the Conservatives came to office; 10 per cent. of men and 44 per cent. of women are employed in work classified as low-paid; more than 13,000 adults depend on social security benefit payments from the local office area more than 12,000 pensioners live in the community, more than half of whom depend on some form of state aid; 2,000 people are severely disabled; about 5,000 full-time, unpaid carers, mainly women, live at home; there are more than 2,500 single parents; and the growing list of homeless people, particularly the young, stands at more than 1,500.

Because of further Government cuts, the local authority in Mansfield has a repair bill on its council houses of more than £12 million, while local industry has lost more than 1,000 jobs in the past 12 months, with fewer than 200 jobs, mainly in retailing, being created.

I pay tribute to the workers, again mainly women, of the William Hollins factory, situated in Plessley vale, Mansfield, who are losing their jobs today because of closure. Their only crime was to make excellent goods while on low pay for the Vyella company. They made shirts, suits, dresses, ties and other clothing which was sold profitably in places such as Harrods in London and major stores in Paris, New York and San Francisco. The firm closes today because it has been asset-stripped by a company which wants its name and reputation, but not the workers' qualities.

During my present and future terms as the representative for Mansfield I shall strive to combat the inequality that exists in the community. I recognise that with the deindustrialisation of Britain by the Tories tourism may play a part in the employment prospects for my area. My constituency and the surrounding areas certainly have the history, the rural settings, with Sherwood forest nearby, and, above all, a warm and friendly population, but I warn any unscrupulous profiteers to keep away. Any developments will need real, protective controls to ensure against unnecessary, predominantly commercial experiments of little use to the area or the workers, both men and women, within it.

[Mr. Alan Meale]

My message should be taken seriously when one recalls the history in days gone by of another representative of the poor from my area who, although not born of my class, used his influence to take from the rich to redistribute to the poor. Therefore my ideals are contrary to the objectives of the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), who put everything on being first. I believe that it is better that we should get the right result, as indeed do the people of Mansfield, who returned a Labour Member of Parliament who is not a tourist to this Chamber.

1.59 pm

Mr. Jack Aspinwall (Wansdyke): I am especially pleased to follow the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) and I congratulate him on his maiden speech. I was pleased that he mentioned his predecessor, Don Concannon, who was a fine and respected Member of the House. He certainly represented Mansfield well and I am sure that the standards set by Don Concannon will be followed by the present hon. Member for Mansfield.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to congratulate the Government on initiating the debate on tourist industry. Tourism has been underestimated in its importance to the economy. Its enormous wealth-creation potential and the prospect of even greater employment opportunities are extremely important. In 1985 some 14.5 million overseas visitors came here and spent about £5.5 billion. Overseas earnings from tourism, to put them in proper context, equalled just over 10 per cent. of all manufactured exports, were ahead of exports of motor vehicles and were worth slightly more than the exports of food, drink and tobacco. Also, we should not forget the importance of the domestic tourist industry and its contribution.

In a sense, employment trends within the industry are difficult to estimate, but jobs in the main tourist sectors of catering and accommodation have grown by 22 per cent. between 1975-85 to just over 1.25 million. The potential is clear. Certainly, the Government and the private sector have begun to recognise the hidden opportunities of the tourist industry. However, I should like to deal with three areas where further energy must be directed by the Government, the private sector and local authorities.

It is important to note that 62 per cent. of all visitors to this country arrive by air. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to ensure that the country is well served by airports. There must be adequate immigration and customs staff to avoid delay. The long queues on arrival are often daunting and the first impression given to visitors is absolutely vital. Our airports must accommodate the discerning air traveller through quality of service and design. Manchester airport, the terminal 4 development at Heathrow and the new developments at Gatwick and Stansted are good examples of design and service standards.

Encouragement must be given to regional airports so as to disperse the benefits of the tourist trade more evenly. However, the importance of London and the south-east should not be forgotten. In 1983 more than 87 per cent. of visitors spent some of their time in the south-east. That was their choice. The Government must give their support to other areas of the country to ensure that they are well served for air travellers in terms of airport capacity and tourist facilities.

There is a definite need for more budget hotels and hostels to accommodate all variety of tourists, both domestic and foreign. It has already been said that hotel building in London is virtually at a standstill. In part that is due to the high costs involved, but it is also due to the attitude of certain London boroughs and councils to tourist developments and planning consent.

Local initiative must be encouraged. In my constituency of Wansdyke, which I unashamedly use as an example, the district council commissioned a report to outline the potential for tourism and leisure in the area. The report clearly stated that the benefits of tourist activity would be substantial both in terms of job creation and commercial benefits.

Wansdyke is situated in the south-east corner of the county of Avon. It is a beautiful area. It circles the historic city of Bath and extends up over the Avon valley to Bristol and south to the Mendip hills and the Somerset boundary. It has easy access to the coast at Weston-super-Mare and the surrounding countryside, including Limply Stoke valley, provides ample opportunity for walking and other activities.

Added attractions of the area include the international balloon fiesta, the Bath festival, the Bath races and the Bristol world wine fair. Wansdyke district can rightly boast of beautiful countryside, with ancient churches in attractive, stone-built villages, good road communications and easy access to points of interest and natural beauty.

The local authority has taken a first step with its report and I hope that it will continue to support and encourage the private sector to take up the challenge of the tourist potential, picking up more than the crumbs from Bath and Bristol's table.

At a time when the Government are persuading the agriculture sector to diversify into alternative land uses, tourism can offer never-ending opportunities. There is a growing demand, both nationally and internationally, for farm holidays. Many farmers are creating special education centres for school visits, enabling children to learn about and better to understand the countryside. There is a huge market for this type of service and it is capable of development.

Leisure activities are also an area of farm diversification. Tourist areas must be better served by sporting and recreational activities. It has been drawn to my attention recently that farmers have been using their land to provide lakes for fishing and sailing. Others have provided golf courses, tennis courts and other special interest facilities. All such developments are vital in an overall strategy to develop further the potential of an area for tourism and to add to the length of the season.

Local authorities must grasp the nettle when discussing planning regulations for the development of farm buildings, caravan sites and bed and breakfast accommodation. There is nothing more frustrating than making an application for better signposting to highlight a particular type of accommodation and being frustrated by the planning authorities. Red tape must be cut.

The status of the tourist industry must be raised and there must be better career advice in schools and more qualification courses in hotel management and catering. The YTS offers huge possibilities. Above all, standards must be maintained to ensure the quality of service offered to tourists.

I am often saddened when I see the nationalities of many people who work in catering—Spanish, German,

Italian and many others. We traditionally associate the service industry with a servile attitude, which seems to be out of character with British traditions. That is why it is essential to have better training and education and to increase the status of those who work in tourism.

Schools and other educational establishments offer sites and facilities and have the capacity to emerge as centres of tourist activity. A great deal is being done, but what about even more initiatives? Throughout the country there are thousands of school buildings sited in attractive grounds and with easy access to surrounding areas. A more entrepreneurial attitude is required to use that capital investment to our advantage.

Cheap accommodation for special interest weekends and exchange visits with other schools, internationally and nationally, would be excellent steps. After all, those young people will be the tourists of the future. Many colleges have already developed exchange visits and twinning arrangements, but more could be done. Perhaps local councils or other agencies could liaise with schools to advertise such activities. The spin-off effects would be enormous and would include employment growth, the emergence of light industry, such as souvenir and craft shops and the provision of tours and other ancillary activities.

Even term-time study could be utilised more positively. The mini enterprise scheme, which familiarises pupils with business, could be used in a more commercial environment, such as by marketing a local product or developing local craft items for sale. That would bring reality into the scheme and stimulate the flair of the young in relation to tourism.

I hope that the debate will encourage district and county councils to appreciate more the value of tourism. The two district councils in my constituency — Kingswood and Wansdyke — do not support the West Country tourist board and neither does Avon county council. I hope that that is not an indication of their attitude to the future needs of the tourist industry and its potential for job creation and a source of revenue. The old rivalries and lack of co-operation between Bristol city council and Avon county council have not always helped, either.

The benefits of tourism to a local community and to the country as a whole are enormous. It is not only the employment and potential that are so valuable, but there is a stimulus to all aspects of industrial and commercial life. Education and industry can become more closely linked. Exchanges with continental schools would lead to greater international understanding. The stimulus to internal mobility would lessen the geographical divide, and increased domestic tourism would lead to the creation of a better transport network. Small businesses would be encouraged, and there would be more local community involvement.

Tourism is an exciting and vibrant industry. I urge the Government to continue their lead in this area, and ensure that the energy of the industry is fully utilised.

2.11 pm

Mr. Sheerman I thank the House for permission to have a second bite. It would be remiss of me if I were not to mention some of the truly first-class maiden speeches that we have heard today. It has really been a pleasure to sit and listen. The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) provided a touch of Edwardian festival and a reference to

Dickens, and made his constituency sound a paradise for yuppies. He also sounded as if he enjoys the prospect of being the hon. Member for Ryedale. I am sure that we shall hear more of him.

My new hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) paid an interesting tribute to his predecessor, and all of us who heard his speech were most impressed. We know that he will make a major contribution to the debates in the House, and we look forward to that.

The hon. Members for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and for Southport (Mr. Fearn) made most interesting contributions, telling us about their predecessors, constituencies and interest in tourism. Having been a resident in Wales for many years, and having had three children born there, I may say that my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) seemed to equal the mellifluous tones of Leo Abse that we enjoyed so much. He reminded us of Leo Abse's style and confidence of manner. We all look forward to the coming debates in which he can display his nurturing in the best traditions of democratic Socialism; we shall have an interesting time.

The last maiden speech in the debate was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale). He promised that ruggedness of debate that we need in the Chamber. We look forward to him being one of the army that will let people—inside and outside of the House—know that the Opposition will take the fight to the Government.

When I first came to the House in 1979, some of the older Members set a better example. People used to stay in debates to listen to the opening speeches and those that followed them. The standards of the House in this matter do not set a good example to the new hon. Members in some respects. This debate has been well worth listening to. We have had all the best of the argument, but I would say that, would I not? Listening to all the hon. Members who have spoken, I have heard the need for a positive, public-private relationship come through in the speeches of hon. Members on both sides of the House. It comes down to the fact that when they are talking about their own town or city, hon. Members believe that the public-private relationship must exist at local level. I believe that it must exist at a national level, too.

Tourism has grown and developed, and is a fast-growing, exciting industry. However, in a more bitter spirit I say that it has grown in spite of the Government rather than because of them. Let us have a little more modesty from the Government about why tourism has grown. That has much more to do with international communications and the ways in which people take their holidays, and so on.

I agree with the Conservative Members who talked in glowing terms about a vibrant and exciting industry, but when in the next breath they say that that must be sustained on the backs of men and women who take home less than £80 a week, it sticks in my craw. When will the Conservative party wake up to the fact that, as a democratic nation, we should want men and women who are well paid, who have a satisfying life and who can afford to consume holidays and the good things of life? Is it not about time that we stopped the restriction of the good life to the few and broadened it to the many? How many Conservative Members would want their children to be on bad training schemes or in part-time employment that is

[Mr. Sheerman]

low paid and has no future? Tourism has a future, but let us make it a future that is good for all the participants—consumers, workers and the nation.

2.16 pm

Mr. Lee: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall reply to the debate. This has been a fascinating debate on tourism, although sometimes the debate has gone a little wider. We have had some outstanding maiden speeches and contributions from those who speak professionally and regularly on tourism. Other hon. Members spoke about constituency interests, mentioning tourism only in part.

Conservative Members are rather fond of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) and were looking for a lightness and brightness in his opening speech, which, sadly, did not appear. I have been in the House since 1979. When we have debates that involve expenditure, whether it be on roads, the Health Service, industry, or even tourism, the Opposition's answer is always the same: "Spend more money." I had hoped that they would change course, having learnt the lesson of 11 June, but today they were talking again about more Government spending on tourism.

I was slightly saddened by some of the hon. Gentleman's comments on the radio this morning. Of course it is true that some of the products bought by tourists in London are imported from overseas, but they are at the lower end of the market—the tat, as it would be called in the north. One need only visit Harrods, or Marks and Spencer, to see the number of foreign tourists who buy predominantly British goods and, in many cases, British textile goods. Both of us represent textile constituencies, and I was glad that the hon. Gentleman acknowledged the health of the textile industry. Only last week I was in Slaithwaite to celebrate the centenary of the Globe Worsted Company, which is part of the Illingworth Morris Group. That group is doing exceptionally well, increasing employment, capital investment and exports, and the outlook is set fair. By and large, manufacturing industry is doing extremely well.

Manufacturing industry is important, but Opposition Members must realise that there is a difference between the prosperity and health of manufacturing industry, and the numbers employed in that industry, for the obvious reasons of increasing automation and more advanced machinery.

I was also depressed by the hon. Gentleman's knocking of career opportunities. There can be an argument about initial wage levels, and I accept some of the points that are made, but while other industries have been shedding jobs, tourism has been rapidly increasing employment. There are all sorts of career opportunities and opportunities for advancement for young people, but none of that was acknowledged by the hon. Member for Huddersfield. I repeat what I said about part-time working. The vast majority of people who work part-time—many of them in tourism and catering—want part-time work because it fits their family patterns and their lifestyles. The hon. Gentleman's description of London as a forbidden city was highly emotive and devoid of reality for the vast majority of the population.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the partnership between local authorities and the Government. The

Government welcome partnership with local authorities. In many cases it is the Labour-controlled local authorities that have turned their backs on the hand that the Government have offered on many occasions. I am talking particularly about things such as the community programme, our task forces and our inner city partnerships. Let me refer specifically to tourism. I can say with certainty that many of the successful tourist projects have involved a partnership of private and public sector money. There is the £6 million urban development grant to the Birmingham Hyatt hotel development, the £1.5 million to Centre Parks at Sherwood forest, the public investment that went into the G Mex exhibition centre in Manchester and the public investment that has gone into London docklands. I applaud that, and I applaud the partnerships. Investment in the tourist industry comes predominately from the private sector and is market led.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), who had to leave and offered his apologies, made an extremely good maiden speech. At the famous Ryedale by-election, I went up to help. It was not a Tory gain. I kept well away during the general election, and I am delighted that my hon. Friend was returned. He drew attention to the superb tourist attractions of Castle Howard and Rievaulx abbey in his constituency. He was one of the first to make the sensible and necessary point about the balance that has to be struck between the needs of an expanding tourist industry and the genuine requirements and concerns of local residents and local communities. A sensitive balance has to be achieved. That was also mentioned by several speakers, particularly the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler).

I should like to make a personal request to my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale. It is that, as an antique collector, I should be delighted if he would give me the names of some of the shops in his constituency where one can acquire one or two of the bargains that he mentioned. I am sure that he will have a long and happy time in the House.

Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) has not stayed, but he made a dignified maiden speech. He referred to "Red Leicester" on 11 June. I always thought that Red Leicester was a cheese—[HON. MEMBERS: "And a very good one."] Indeed, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to reply to his maiden speech in English. He used some minority languages that I could not follow. I have happy memories of my time in Leicester. I spent a fair amount of time there when I was chairman for three years of the National Youth Bureau, which was based in Leicester. The hon. Gentleman hardly touched on the subject of tourism, which we are debating today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) follows a most respected and distinguished father. I hope that his service in the House will be as long and as happy as that of his father. My hon. Friend's was on the first election results. I look forward to him coming to talk to me about the development of Cockington Court. The new Riviera centre in Torbay is an excellent example of what local councils can achieve. One applauds their initiative. I am delighted that my hon. Friend is now playing a major role in the tourism debate at Westminster and encouraging tourism. I am sure that he will not be too discriminating about whether the tourists who come to Torbay are

domestic tourists or, perhaps, people from the CIA or the KGB. It will not matter, as long as they have dollars and roubles to spend in Torbay.

The hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn), in his maiden speech, made gracious comments that were well received on the Conservative Benches about his predecessor, Sir Ian Percival, who was a much-loved and respected Member. I know Southport fairly well. I frequently visit an elderly aunt who lives in Hesketh road and I walk past one of the golf courses on the way to the front. A little more sea at Southport would be the best thing that could happen to it, but I acknowledge the beauty of its flower shows.

I am not sure whether the invitation extended to Mr. Speaker to join the hon. Gentleman for a meal of local shrimps could be extended to me, but if it is I shall accept with great alacrity. We all know Southport's famous Lord street shopping centre, which has a character all its own. I am sure that all hon. Members admired the hon. Gentleman's maiden speech, and I look forward to close contact with him as a fellow north-western Member.

The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) made a most eloquent and outstanding speech, which has been warmly applauded by hon. Members in all parts of the House. He spoke from the heart about his valleys and about the history of democratic Socialism. I can pay him no higher tribute than to say that he is as eloquent as his leader, and perhaps he has the added advantage of a degree of brevity that was well taken.

The hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale), who is not in the Chamber, paid generous tribute in his maiden speech to Don Concannon, who was highly regarded and respected by all hon. Members. He said that the two alliance leaders visited Mansfield during the general election campaign. If he were here, I would ask him whether on that occasion there was an example of democratic fusion or democratic fission.

The hon. Gentleman talked about a subsidiary of Coats Viyella. I cannot comment on the specific subsidiary that he mentioned, but he made a number of charges against the parent company, which is a substantial employer in my constituency and also in the constituency of the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). By and large, the company is a first-class employer. It is trading very well at present, and has good wage levels and a continuing level of capital investment. I certainly do not recognise the company by the asset-stripping description given by the hon. Gentleman.

I shall now comment on some of the more professional speeches made by some of my colleagues who speak on tourism matters. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) spoke from his deep knowledge of the industry and mentioned the contribution of about £5.5 million that it makes to earnings from overseas. My hon. Friend played a distinguished role on the Back-Bench tourism committees.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Killedder), initially and understandably, confused tourism and terrorism. In a sense that makes the precise point that he was trying to make about the very sad and tragic problem of Northern Ireland and the difficulties of those who work hard to promote tourism in the face of the appalling incidence of terrorism.

We had a thoughtful contribution by the hon. Member for Caernarfon, who told us that he would have to leave the debate before its conclusion. He talked about tourism in Wales and of the need to strike a balance between the needs of a community and the needs of tourism. I have spent many happy holidays in Wales and wanted to talk to him about some of my experiences, but, sadly, he is not in the Chamber at the moment.

Among the more professional speeches was that of my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory), who has a deep interest in, and knowledge of, the subject. He spoke about the ETB consultancy services, but these are only on a limited scale—about 10 to 15 assignments per year. It is made clear to applicants that appointment of the ETB as a paid consultant has no bearing on any section 4 applications.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) was also one of the professionals. He praised legislation for the liberalising of the licensing laws announced in the Gracious Speech and I—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 6th July—

- (a) if proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to the future of the *Today* newspaper have not been concluded by Seven o'clock, Mr. Speaker shall at that hour put any Questions necessary to dispose of them; and
- (b) the Local Government Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. — [Mr. David Hunt.]

Elections (Postal and Proxy Votes)

Motion made, and Question proposed. That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Dorrell.]

2.30 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): The theme of tourism will re-emerge in the brief debate that I have the pleasure of introducing. I welcome the opportunity to discuss, while the memories of the last election are still fresh in our minds, the arrangements for postal and proxy votes. Following the Representation of the People Act 1985 and the subsequent regulations, new arrangements were enforced for the first time last month and they were, quite frankly, a shambles. We must use the time between now and the next election to get things right.

A vigorous democracy such as that which we enjoy depends on people exercising their right to vote. Traditionally, this is done by people placing their ballot papers in the box at their local polling station on election day. However, Parliament has recognised that, as society changes, voting procedures must also change if the citizen is to retain and exercise his democratic right. We live longer, but in our later years many of us cannot physically get to the polling station. We move house more often, and cannot easily get back to the constituency where we are registered. People's work takes them more frequently away from their homes and, crucially, more people go away on holiday. I have seen an estimate of 1.2 million people away on 11 June.

Parliament has responded to the social changes by allowing people to vote by post or proxy, but, in seeking to interpret the will of Parliament, the Home Office has been restrictive and incompetent. Far from strengthening the democratic system by making it easier for the citizen to vote, it has weakened it by making it so complicated and bureaucratic that thousands gave up or failed to clear the high hurdles placed in their path.

Let me start with our old friend RPF8. This was the form that we used to fill in when we moved house. It was simple. One said that one was entitled to vote at one's old address, one gave one's new address and one sent it off to one's old town hall. That covered one for the parliamentary and European elections, and for the lifetime of that register. One did not have to get the form attested, and one did not have to wait for the election to be called to send it off. One did not have to re-apply if there were a second election. Sadly, RPF8 is no more. Instead, we have RPF9.

The RPF9 cannot be completed until the date of the election is known. Furthermore, it has to be attested—a new word for many of us—by someone who knows that the facts as stated are true and, crucially, by someone who has not attested on another form. One has to wait for the date, complete the form, find someone in the area, to which one may have moved quite recently, who is prepared to certify that one used to live at one's old address and then get it back to the old town hall in a period that could be as short as five days. If one has a wife and grown-up children with one, one has to get separate attestors for each of them.

Furthermore, there are problems for the town hall. In the old days, it could process the forms for those who moved before the election was called. Now, it cannot, and the forms have to be processed along with the other proxy and postal vote forms that cannot be completed until the

date is known. What is more, the important parts of the form are highlighted in boxes, except for the most important, the signature of the applicant at the end, which thousands of people missed because of the faulty design of the form. Come back RPF8, all is forgiven.

Form 7B is for people who cannot get to the polling station because of physical disability. It is, to put it mildly, not "user friendly". An elderly person wanting to vote under the heading of physical incapacity must decide whether the home in which he or she lives is registered under section 1 of the Registered Homes Act 1984 or section 21 (1) of the National Assistance Act 1948 or whether he or she lives in premises forming one of a group of premises which are provided for persons of pensionable age or physically disabled persons and for which there is a resident warden, or they have to dig out the reference number on their mobility allowance booklet. Previously such people simply had to affirm that they could not vote because of physical incapacity and they had to get a doctor, nurse, justice of the peace or councillor to countersign the form.

On the new form, the crucial space for the final signature is not in a box and thousands of people missed it. In many cases the new form requires a doctor's or nurse's signature whereas previously the necessary declaration could be given by a justice of the peace or a councillor. Many doctors were too busy to sign those forms and many elderly people, knowing the pressure on GPs, were very reluctant to trouble the GP over a matter which did not concern their health. Also, no information is given on the form about how quickly it must be returned to the town hall if a voter is to qualify.

I want to consider now those people who wanted a postal or proxy vote because they were on holiday, and I refer to form RPF9. I want to quote from two of the many letters that I have received on this matter.

"Dear Sir George,

May we first of all say how pleased we were to return from holiday to find you are still our MP and with an increased majority. After two visits to Ealing Town Hall, visits and phone calls to the Conservative Branch . . . (in search of someone to vote proxy for us, as our holiday abroad started on May 30th so we couldn't have a postal vote) we were fortunate enough to secure the services of Mrs. Mander. However, we feel that this facility is only for very loyal supporters of a party, and wondered if, before the next election, this could all be made simpler, as we know from conversations with people on our coach tour, that many did not proceed with their opportunity to vote because of the time involved (as well as the expense from living a distance from their Town Hall.)"

Another letter I received was sent by Mr. Battleday. He wrote:

"Dear Sir George,

Many congratulations on your re-election. More power to you in you campaign to iron out the inequalities in the poll-tax argument."

That is a separate debate upon which I will not now embark.

"Unfortunately my wife and I were unable to cast our votes for you owing to the fact that we were abroad from June 2nd until after the election.

We made our applications for postal votes, and clearly state when we would be leaving the country, but did not receive voting papers in time.

Of course we found them when we returned but they were not posted in time to have reached us, so we cannot blame the Post Office.

It would be advantageous to all parties if the new system of postal voting could be, in some way, revised to cover such a contingency.

Once again, we are very pleased by your re-election." I have seen a press release dated 9 June following a survey taken by SunMed holidays which stated that some 650,000 votes were lost as a result of British holidaymakers being overseas on election day. The survey also states:

"Whilst 20 per cent. had appointed a proxy vote and 9 per cent. had applied for a postal vote, amongst this latter group only 4 per cent. had actually voted with their postal vote before leaving on holiday."

In other words, more than half of those who applied for a postal vote did not receive one in time.

Although applications for a postal vote must be made by a certain date, there are no rules about when the town hall has to send them out. Although the Home Office has powers to prescribe the date, it has not used those powers. Many people applied believing that the forms would be sent promptly, but they were not. Some electoral registration officers were sending them out seven days before polling day, although nominations had closed and postal vote applications had to be in much earlier.

Those on holiday had an additional hurdle to clear. For the first time non-medical applications had to be attested. A family of four going on holiday had to find four different attestors who were not relatives and who had not done any other attesting—it being an offence to be a multiple attestor, although for the life of me I cannot see why.

Not only did the votes not have to be posted out by a certain date, but the list of absent voters does not have to be issued by a certain date, either. In the London borough of Ealing, many of those lists were issued on a Sunday, the day before the ballot papers were issued on the Monday, making it difficult to send out an election address if one belongs to a party which likes to have Sunday as a rest day.

The 1985 Act introduced for the first time the right to make a late application for an absent vote in the event of a medical emergency. Distress has been caused because the Home Office has supported electoral registration officers in their refusal to accept some applications that have been made by those entering hospital. These are people who have been on waiting lists for non-urgent operations and who have been unforeseeably called into hospital after the 13th day. The wording of the rules is such that they are disqualified.

Those whose jobs take them away on business used to complete an RPF7. They had to affirm that by reason of the general nature of their occupation, for example, they were unlikely to be able to vote in person. The new RPF7 makes it necessary for such people to obtain their employer's signature, and if they are self-employed they must obtain the signature of an attestor. Why do we need that additional requirement?

It is hardly surprising that 80 per cent. of the forms that were returned to my office were incorrect. I had the help of a full-time volunteer, Sylvia Hewitt, to whom I pay tribute, as well as the hard work of my agent, Julia Kernick, to return the forms and to ensure that they were completed correctly and submitted in sufficient time to enable electors to exercise their democratic right.

Thousands of voters were disfranchised. A form that should replicate as closely as possible the simplicity of voting in person came to resemble a qualifying round of "Mastermind". I have a four-page letter from the Wandsworth electoral registration officer, which was sent to the Home Office. It is dated 23 June. One passage of the letter reads:

"the number of problems that arose regarding absent voting seriously affected the workload and efficiency of the electoral registration office, and a tremendous amount of time was wasted in dealing with application forms which were not completed correctly by the applicants."

The letter refers to advertisements and states:

"those forms which came in as a result of advertisements in the national press and which were not completed correctly amounted to a very high percentage. The adverts did not appear to get the message across about absent voting inasmuch as explaining about postal votes not being sent out of the United Kingdom (or Isle of Man and Channel Islands), and when the ballot papers were likely to be despatched. Some members of the public were under the illusion that ballot papers would be despatched by return of post."

It is estimated that in Dorset, North—I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) is in his place—50 per cent. of original applications sent to the town hall had to be rejected. Happily, this did not significantly reduce the enormous majority with which my hon. Friend was returned on 11 June, but the loss of these votes could have been crucial. A similar estimate was made in Wyre, Lancashire.

I have two matters to put to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. The political parties, which are at the sharp end of these procedures, were not invited to comment on the design of the relevant form. That was a departure from long-established custom. My first request to my hon. Friend is to open a constructive dialogue with representatives of political parties to secure their views. I am indebted to David Smith of Central Office for his help in the constructive comments that I have made.

My second request is that a conference should be convened of the electoral registration officers to obtain their views. Having done that, I urge my hon. Friend to lay the necessary regulations before the House well before the next general election so that citizens can exercise with greater ease their precious rights. I know that my hon. Friend has the necessary energy and diligence to discharge these tasks. If he does so, the House and the electorate will have cause to be grateful to him.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead) *rose*—

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North) *rose*—

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South) *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker Mr. Harold Walker: Order. I see that three hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. Does each of them have the consent of the Minister (and the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) to intervene? I understand that they do. I call Sir Geoffrey Finsberg.

2.43 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) for allowing me to make a brief intervention in this Adjournment debate. I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State not to put on his usual courteous attitude and defend his civil servants. To put it bluntly, they are the people who should be blamed for the nonsense that we saw during the general election this year. Mr. David Mitchell of Conservative Central Office, who has been looking after electoral registration for more years than I care to remember, said that he had never seen such a shambles at the Home Office hitherto.

It is clear that whoever designed the current forms has never worked in an election and does not understand the

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

intricacies and the problems that arise. Civil servants are behaving in a most stubborn and bureaucratic manner. I seldom criticise civil servants, but on this occasion I do because they are interfering with the rights of the citizen. Will my hon. Friend consider returning to the old system and to the use of the good, old-fashioned English word "witness"? Will he also consider doing away with the need for the witnessing of removals? That was never needed before. Will he also consider giving back to justices of the peace the right to witness more than one document? It is as simple as that.

I know that my hon. Friend has the will and the power to do it. He knows that he has the support of the two major political parties and the support of the electoral registration officers. I hope that he will take urgent action on these points.

2.45 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) for raising this subject. He has performed an important public service. In this mobile age, it is right to extend the franchise to as many people as possible. However, the arrangements have been introduced too hastily. At the last general election they did not work as they should have done.

About 50 per cent. of the applicants for postal votes in Dorset, North did not complete their forms correctly. The returning officer was as helpful as he could be, but many electors in Dorset, North and in the rest of the country were disfranchised.

Would it be possible for form No. 9 to extend the time limit, by allowing people to make an application for a postal vote at the next election, whenever that may be? Each form should be of a different colour. A great deal of confusion was caused to the wretched, would-be applicants because of the number of different forms. They should also be marked much more clearly and distinctly. Furthermore, some students in my constituency do not know into which category they come. The forms should also be of a standard size. That would make it easier for the returning officer and his staff.

My next point regarding attestation was made both by my hon. Friend the Member for Acton and by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg). The clause is not clear. There is no reason why a person should be restricted to attesting only one form. It is difficult for the returning officer and his staff to check a large number of attestations in the number of days granted. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider extending the time during which postal and proxy applications can be gathered. One of the forms refers to the signature, but it does not refer to the signature of the applicant.

The forms have not been carefully drawn. Therefore I congratulate my hon. Friend for Acton on bicycling through this important issue and on picking up many of these points. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to do something about them.

2.48 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) on being so quick off the mark on this important subject so

soon after the election. I endorse all that he said about the complication of the procedure. Many people allege that a degree in either politics or law is required to succeed in leaping these hurdles. I hope that the rumour that there are too many lawyers in the Home Office is no part of the problem and that they will apply their minds to making it easier for ordinary people to fill in these forms.

Other factors complicate this question. I refer in particular to the Post Office. I was told by the acting returning officer in my constituency that nearly 200 letters were posted on the day before, or earlier, but failed to reach his office in time to meet the deadline that had been laid down by law. That is unsatisfactory. The Post Office was entirely inadequate. Whether privatisation would improve the matter remains to be seen, but this certainly must not be allowed to continue in the future.

I have had from constituents many letters complaining about the inadequacy of the present arrangements. I will not burden the House by reading any of them now. However, I make one suggestion which is that we should consider seriously the possibility of allowing electors to vote on the previous Thursday if they so wish at the Town hall of the district in which the constituency is situated. In that way they can register their vote in person seven days beforehand on proof of identity. That would reduce considerably the amount of effort required by staff and the Post Office in dealing with the considerable number of extra people who are now eligible to apply for postal votes, and it might simplify the matter in the future. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to look carefully at this matter because we expect some major improvements long before the next election.

2.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I hope that we shall have major improvements. I am grateful to my four hon. Friends who have raised this important subject and I entirely agree with what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). He said that it is essential that the forms be as simple as possible so as to ensure that the maximum number of people are able to vote and that the complexity of the forms is not such as to deter or frustrate those wishes.

The Home Office has no monopoly of wisdom on this matter and I am more than ready to accept that there are aspects of the law, procedure and the forms we have adopted that will demand improvement. The first step I have taken through the Home Office is to invite electoral registration officers to inform us of their views regarding the forms and the substantive law. I am not contemplating colling a conference. I have no particular objection to conferences and if it seems necessary we will have a conference. However, the first step is to invite written representations and I have already done that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Acton said that we should involve the political parties. I agree with that. I have instructed the officials at the Home Office to invite the political parties to inform us of their views as to shortcomings in law, procedure and forms. The fact that four of my hon. Friends have taken this opportunity to raise the matter emphasises the fact that hon. Members have many reservations about what happened. I am grateful to my hon. Friends and each of the points they have made will be carefully considered. If they would like to add to them that would be extremely welcome and I

hope that other hon. Members not present today but who have views on the subject will communicate them to the Home Office.

In broad terms, as I have said, we have no monopoly of wisdom and we do not pretend that we have. We will look again at substantive law, the procedure and the forms with a view to simplifying them, removing anomalies and trying to get them into a better state. I approach this matter in a wholly open-minded way. I have no preconceptions except for the desire to ensure simplicity.

Several points were raised and hon. Members will appreciate that I cannot give any commitments at this stage because we are only starting a process of consultation. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg), associated in this matter with my hon. Friend the Member for Acton, talked about removals. My hon. Friends are wholly right on that point. It is clear that the requirements as they presently stand make it extremely difficult for people who have changed address to vote at all. That is highly undesirable and I shall look at the matter carefully.

My hon. Friends the Members for Acton, Hampstead and Highgate and others such as my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) talked about attestation. That is important. I, too, had never heard the word before. It is an interesting word. I am not sure exactly what it means but clearly we have to see whether it can be replaced by a more readily comprehensible word. Indeed, the question arises whether the requirements as to attestation as they stand at present are right. Should there be an extended range of people who are excluded from the right to attest? Should there be a restriction on the number of attestations that one person makes? Do we need attestation at all? My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate said that this did not happen to be the case in the past regarding removals. Those are the types of questions that we must confront and I propose to do just that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate suggested that a justice of the peace should be entitled to attest more than once. He may well be right and I shall certainly consider that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North made several points, many of which were of a fairly detailed character. Plainly, the documents should be numbered on the face of them clearly and comprehensively. He also spoke about their colours. They are coloured, but the problem is that one does not want the papers to have a colour that connotes a political party. Therefore, we have the rather drab colours that he knows about. Nevertheless, we shall certainly have another look at colours.

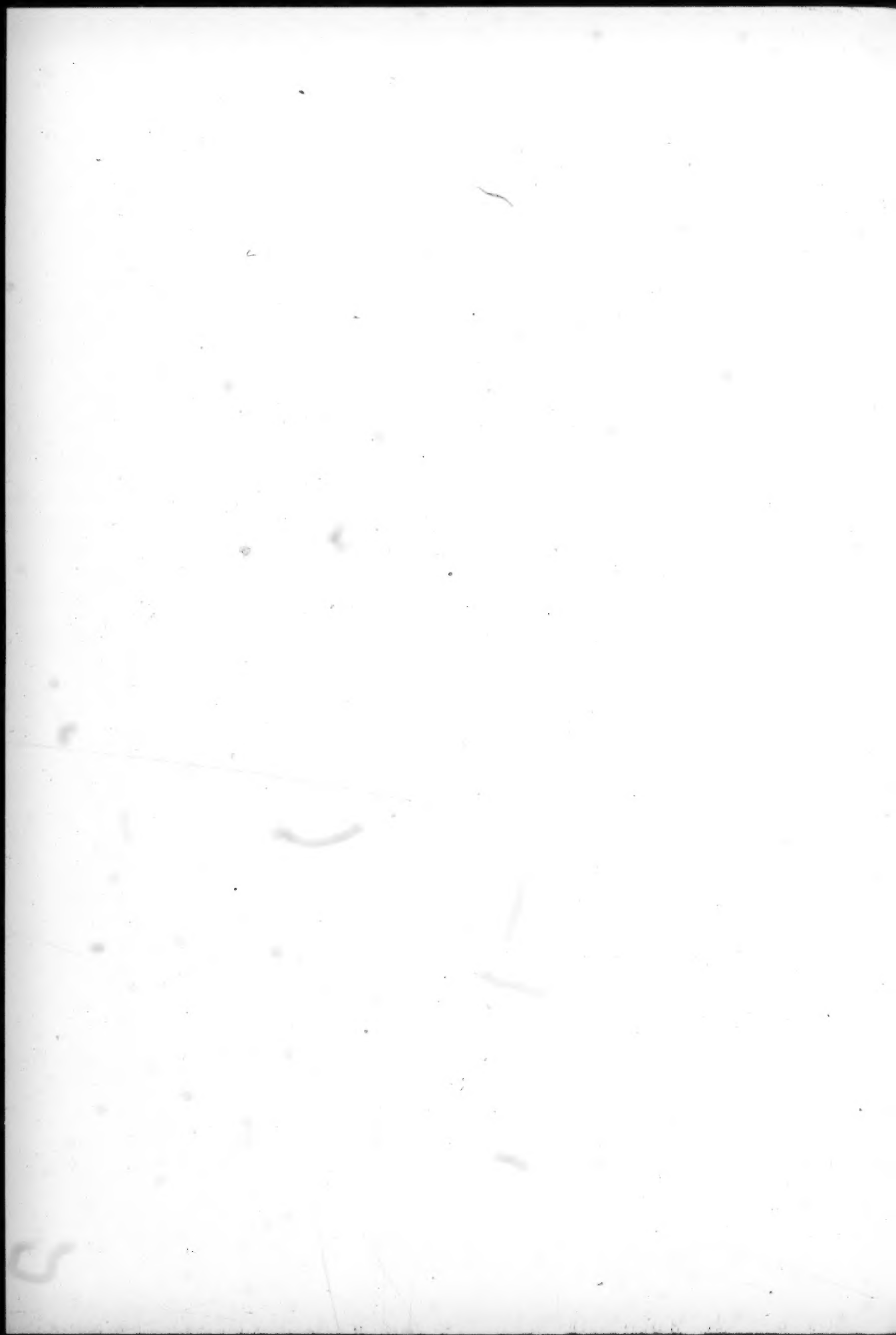
There is a difficulty with form No. 9 and unlimited time. I do not want to close my mind to anything, but the entitlement at a particular election to vote by post or proxy because one is going on holiday does not arise until the date of the election has been fixed. Therefore, there are difficulties in having an unlimited time application form for some of the form No. 9 cases to which my hon. Friend referred. Again, we can discuss that.

I shall consider my hon. Friend's point on standard size. I thought that the forms were in standard size. If that is not the case, I shall look at the matter again.

The plain fact is that we may well have made mistakes in this matter. My officials did their best, it is an extremely complicated matter and they consulted the political parties, but we shall look at it again. I approach the matter with a thoroughly open mind. I wish to ensure that the documents are as clear and easy to use as possible. It is important that people should be able to vote. I shall consider in a wholly open-minded manner all the representations that we receive, and I hope that we shall come to the House with proposals which will commend themselves to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to hon. Members and to my hon. Friends.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Three o'clock.



Written Answers to Questions

Friday 26 June 1987

HOME DEPARTMENT

Departmental Costs

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect the transfer of the immigration appellate authorities to the Lord Chancellor's Department will have on the Home Office running costs limit.

Mr. Hurd: The Home Office departmental gross running costs limit will reduce by £852,000 from £760,509,000 to £759,657,000 due partly to reduced Home Office administration costs associated with the transfer of the immigration appellate authorities and partly to a change in the classification of minor building works.

Pakistan v. England Cricket Match

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received a report from the chief constable of West Midlands about the disorder at the Pakistan v. England cricket match at Edgbaston on 25 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have received a full report from the chief constable. The disorder at Edgbaston was confined to a small minority of spectators in the Rae Bank stand area of the ground. The stand had become overcrowded and a number of those present had drunk too much. One member of the public was seriously injured.

It is important that steps should be taken to avoid a recurrence of this lamentable outbreak and I welcome the early discussions which the Test and County Cricket Board and the test grounds authorities have had with the police to identify and implement a range of measures to curb unruly behaviour at matches in the future.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC Budget Council

Miss Fookes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community Budget Council.

Mr. Brooke: The Budget Council met on 2 June in Luxembourg. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed the Commission's preliminary draft supplementary and amending budget for 1987. I made it clear that there was no question of additional resources being provided for the Community in 1987 and that ways must be found of reducing expenditure.

The Council adjourned without reaching agreement.

EC (Budget)

Mr. Robert B. Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the European Commission's latest cash position and the implications for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: The European Commission estimated that its spending obligations in June would again exceed available revenues under the budget for 1987.

The Commission therefore requested member states to advance from July into June the payment of own resources other than VAT in accordance with article 10(2) of Council regulation 2891/77: a similar advance was made last month. The Government are satisfied that this request was within the vires of article 10(2) and accordingly made an advance payment on 19 June of £133 million from the Consolidated Fund under section 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972. The payment of levies and duties on 20 July will be reduced by the amount of the advance.

The Commission has also informed us that it has had to overdraw its accounts with member states in June in accordance with article 12(2) of Council regulation 2891/77. The amount involved for the United Kingdom is expected to be of the order of £210 million. The Government are meeting this obligation from the Consolidated Fund in accordance with section 2(3) of the European Communities Act, 1972. Repayment of drawings made under this facility will be made by deduction from subsequent own resources payments.

Neither of these facilities involved increasing the total amounts which the Community is authorised to spend during 1987. There is therefore no net addition to public expenditure.

EC (Council Meetings)

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the European Community's Economic and Finance Council's meeting, and its joint meeting with the Agriculture Council, in Luxembourg on 15 June.

Mr. Nigel Lawson: The United Kingdom was represented at the joint Council by myself and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I then attended the first part of the Economic and Finance Council, and Her Majesty's permanent representative to the European Communities represented the United Kingdom thereafter.

The joint Council discussed the Community's budgetary situation and this year's agricultural price fixing exercise. We stressed the need for the price fixing to make significant contributions to reducing the expenditure overruns anticipated for this year and next, and, more generally, to move the Community towards a more market oriented agriculture policy. We reiterated our firm opposition to the Commission's proposal for an oils and fats tax. We argued that the Community's arrangements for handling the agricultural consequences of currency realignments must be radically reformed and that the switch proposed by the Commission from advances to reimbursement of agricultural guarantee expenditure would be an essential element in solving the Community's budgetary problems in the current year. Discussion of these issues continues in the individual Councils.

The Economic and Finance Council formally adopted the reference framework for the 1988 Community budget on the basis of the common position reached at its meeting on 11 May.

The Council heard progress reports on the work being carried out by the Monetary Committee and the Committee of EC Central Bank Governors on strengthening the European monetary system.

The Council discussed draft directives on credit and suretyship insurance and mutual recognition of listing particulars to be issued when securities are admitted to official stock exchange listings. Both directives were referred to later Councils for further consideration.

The Council considered the Commission's formal report on the financial effects for Spain and Portugal of the Council's decision to delay reimbursement to member states of losses incurred on the disposal of butter stocks. The Council asked permanent representatives to examine the report in preparation for a substantive discussion at its July meeting.

The Council met a delegation from the European Parliament to discuss some technical amendments to a Community own resources regulation, on which the Council had previously reached a common position. Significant progress was made towards agreement.

ENVIRONMENT

Stratospheric Ozone Review Group

Mr. Paice asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the first report from the stratospheric ozone review group will be published.

Mr. Moynihan: The review group has completed its report, and a final draft is now being prepared. I expect it to be published in August.

I have placed a copy of the executive summary of the report in the Library of the House.

Development Commission

Mr. Paice asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he has made for the provision of the additional resources for the Development Commission announced as part of the farming and rural enterprise package.

Mr. Moynihan: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for Class X, Vote 2 will be increased by £599,000 from £195,909,000 to £196,508,000 to include the extra resources for the Development Commission. The increase was announced as part of the Government's "Farming and Rural Enterprise" package on 10 March 1987. The increase will be within the Department's existing public expenditure provision and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

WALES

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will announce an increase in his cash limits to take account of the pay settlements following the recommendations of the National Health Service review bodies.

Mr. Grist: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limit for class XVII, vote 8 (Hospital and Community Health Services, etc., Wales) will be increased by £17,730,000 from £699,106,000 to £716,836,000 and that for class XVII, vote 5 (Tourism, roads and transport, housing, other environmental services (including civil defence), education

and science, arts and libraries, and health and personal social services, Wales) by £270,000 from £214,298,000 to £214,568,000. These increases should enable services to continue to be delivered and developed as planned and follows the decision to implement, from 1 April 1987, the recommendations of the review bodies in respect of doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and professions allied to medicine, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 23 April 1987.

These increases will be charged to the reserve and therefore do not add to the public expenditure planning total.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Science Funding

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes any changes to the cash limits for his Department's Votes for science funding in 1987-88.

Mr. Jackson: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates the 1987-88 cash limits for class XII, votes 5 to 11 will be increased as follows:

£ million			
Vote	Current cash limit	Revision	Revised cash limit
Description of expenditure			
5 AFRC	52,927	+1.5	54,427
6 MRC	133,530	+6.3	139,830
7 NERC	71,270	+0.8	72,070
8 SERC	350,252	+7.5	357,752
9 ESRC	24,045	+0.8	24,845
10 BM(NH)	17,558	+0.3	17,858
11 Other Science	7,667	+0.3	7,967

The changes in the cash limits are made to enable the Science Vote bodies to sustain the work of the most able scientists and their teams as my right hon. Friend announced on 1 April 1987, at column 1098. The new cash limit for the Medical Research Council includes an additional £2,500,000 to enable the council to carry out a directed programme of AIDS research as announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services on 25 February 1987, at column 2729. All these increases are being charged to the reserve, and will not therefore add to the public expenditure planning total.

Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about appointments to the governing body of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I announced last December the appointment of Sir Hugh Campbell Byatt as chairman of the reconstituted governing body of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research. I have now appointed nine other governors:

Mr. M. Austin—Head of modern language department, Lord Grey school, Buckinghamshire;
Mr. A. H. R. Calderwood—County Education Officer, Cleveland county council;
Mrs. E. Gilmore—Managing director, Michael Peters and Partners;

Mr. A. Harding Dean of modern studies, Oxford polytechnic.

Professor I. Hickey Professor of Spanish, Salford university.

Mr. R. T. Pullin Department of education, Sheffield university.

Mr. R. Taylor Director of IC (Language and Communication Services) Ltd.

Mr. M. Whalley Modern language adviser, Essex county council.

Mr. N. L. M. Wolfers Group adviser (Asia and Pacific), Midland Bank Group.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, has appointed as his nominee Mr. M. J. Prowse, general adviser on secondary education for Dumfries and Galloway region education authority and chairman of the consultative committee on the curriculum's central support group on modern languages.

I believe that a smaller governing body reconstituted in this way will be the best fitted to guide the development of the centre so that it focuses more closely on the needs of schools and the promotion of our policy on the study of foreign languages. The current scheme of government for the centre provides, however, for a fixed complement of 16 governors, and can be amended only on the recommendation of the governing body. So, to enable the scheme to be varied to permit greater flexibility in the numbers, I am appointing five officials from my Department to the remaining governorships. They will cease membership as soon as the scheme of government is changed.

Plant Breeding Institute and National Seed Development Organisation

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the sale of part of the Plant Breeding Institute and the National Seed Development Organisation.

Mr. Jackson: After consideration of the bids received, the following companies have now been included on a short list of possible purchasers for certain Plant Breeding Institute plant breeding assets and the National Seed Development Organisation:

Booker plc
Imperial Chemical Industries plc
Unilever plc

I shall announce the name of the successful purchaser in due course.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will be initiating the consultations on the order which will bring into effect the 1 October 1987 pay increases for teachers.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today sent to the relevant local education authority associations, teachers' associations and bodies representing the interests of governors of voluntary schools, drafts of the following:

- (a) an order which provides for the 1 October part of the 1987 pay increase for school teachers by reference to the document described below;
- (b) a document to be published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office entitled "School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 1987" which sets out the provisions which will be brought into effect by the order, including the conditions of employment previously set out in the first order, and

- (c) a circular identifying key features about the arrangements for pay set out in the document.

Any comments have been invited by 17 July. These drafts fulfil the Government's intention announced on 2 March to provide for an average 16.4 per cent. pay increase for teachers in 1987 and to introduce a new pay structure.

Copies of the covering letter and the drafts are available from the Vote Office.

DEFENCE

Cash Limits

Mr. Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he proposes to make any changes to the current cash limits for 1987-88.

Mr. Younger: Yes. The following changes are being made, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Summer Supplementary Estimate.

£'000s

Class I	Current Cash Limit	Increase/Decrease	Revised Cash Limit
1.1	7,255,411	+ 2,000 ¹	7,257,411
1.4	1,480,330	- 2,000 ²	1,478,330

¹ Increased provision

² Transferred to 1.1.

The increase in class I, vote 1 provision reflects some works services to be undertaken other than through the Property Services Agency. The works in question are port facilities which will be constructed by a private commercial company on the Ministry's behalf. With the necessary money being transferred from class I, vote 4, this change has no effect on public expenditure.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any changes will be made to cash limits for his Department.

Mr. Newton: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XIV, vote 3 (Miscellaneous Health Services and Personal Social Services, England) will be increased by £2,500,000 (from £399,664,000 to £402,164,000), to reflect the increased allocation to the Public Health Laboratory Service Board announced on 15 May, and the cash limit for class XIV, vote 1 (Hospital and Community Health Services) will be reduced by £1 million to £10,339,618,000. Since the non-cash limited class XIV, vote 2 (Family Practitioner and Other Services (England)) now requires £1,500,000 less than was earlier estimated, there is no net change in the public expenditure planning total.

EMPLOYMENT

Departmental Cash Limits

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limits for 1987-88.

Mr. Fowler: The cash limits on class VII, vote 1 will be reduced by £3,125,000 from £1,397,636,000 to

£1,394,511,000 and the cash limit on class VII, vote 5 will be reduced by £6 million from £1,992,128,000 to £1,986,128,000 to enable a transfer of £9,125,000 to be made to the Department of Trade and Industry (class V, vote 2) to fund expenditure by that Department in 1987-88 on the inner cities initiative and city action teams. This increase will be subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate. My Department's remaining provision for those programmes will be transferred to the DTI in Winter Supplementary Estimates.

No net increase to public expenditure results from these changes.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Departmental Costs

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Attorney-General what effect the transfer to the Lord Chancellor's Department of the immigration appellate authorities announced by the Prime Minister on 12 March, *Official Report*, column 264, and other recent changes will have on the Lord Chancellor's running costs limit.

The Attorney-General: There will be a net increase in the Lord Chancellor's Department's gross running costs limit of £1,610,000 from £188,903,000 to £190,513,000. Two factors contribute to this change: firstly, the transfer of the immigration appellate authorities to the Lord Chancellor's Department, and, secondly, the fact that expenditure on judges' robes and sheriff's rewards is no longer to be classified as running costs.

Land Registry

Mr. Hayes asked the Attorney-General what change is proposed for the 1987-88 running costs limit for the Land Registry.

The Attorney-General: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the running costs limit for the Land Registry will be increased by £9,067,000 from £91,030,000 to £100,097,000. The high level of activity in the conveyancing and mortgage market and the growth in the credit economy continues to generate heavy work loads for the Land Registry and the number of applications for registration in 1987-88 is now forecast to exceed, by 12.8 per cent., the level upon which the running cost limit was originally based. The additional resources sought will help to reduce the time in processing applications thereby reducing the risk of serious disruption to conveyancing in England and Wales. All of the increased running costs will be offset by the extra fee revenue generated by the higher work load and no net increase in public expenditure is involved.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Central Electricity Generating Board

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the transmission activities of the Central Electricity Generating Board will be published.

Mr. Maude: The report is published today.

The commission was asked to report whether the CEGB could improve its efficiency and thereby reduce its costs in discharging its functions for the transmission of electricity in bulk.

The commission found that the CEGB generally manages the transmission function efficiently in the interests of its customers (that is, mainly, the area boards) and in discharge of its statutory duty. However, the commission found room for improvement in some aspects of management and organisation. The report identifies a failure so far to manage effectively a major new computer project for grid control and points to a number of other areas of weakness. The report makes a number of recommendations for improvement. In certain cases the CEGB already has remedies in hand.

Nothing learnt in the inquiry casts doubt upon the technological competence of the CEGB in its transmission of electricity in bulk. In particular, the CEGB maintains a very high level of security of supply through its transmission network (as was evident during the severe weather during the early months of the year). The commission found no course of conduct by the CEGB which operates against the public interest.

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Maples asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limits for 1987-88.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limit on class V, vote 2 will be increased by £9,125,000 from £462,124,000 to £471,249,000 to fund additional expenditure in 1987-88 on the inner cities initiative and city action teams, for which my Department now has responsibility. No net increase to public expenditure results from this change. The Department of Employment's existing provision for these programmes and their running costs will be transferred to my Department in Winter Supplementary Estimates.

Internal Market Council

Mr. Maples asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will report on the Internal Market Council held on 11 June.

Mr. Alan Clark: The council reached agreement on eight items in the presidency action programme for completing the community's internal market. These were a directive and recommendation on the introduction of mobile telephony in the community, directives on standards for simple pressure vessels and on permissible sound pressure levels for tower cranes, two directives on type approval arrangements for motor vehicles and their trailers, and regulations on the requirements on exporters to provide customs authorities with guarantees, on the rules applied by member states to customs debt, and on the temporary importation of containers. The Council also discussed the entry into force of the Community patent convention and the proposed directives on the controls and formalities applicable to EC nationals at intra Community borders; on a right of residence for EC nationals in other member states; and on the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous preparations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

China

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the outcome of the claims negotiations with China.

Mr. Eggar: Discussions between the two Governments led to the signature of a claims agreement between China and the United Kingdom in Peking on 5 June 1987. The agreement was signed by the Chinese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Zhou Nan and Her Majesty's ambassador to China, Sir Richard Evans, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

The agreement takes the form of a mutual waiver of all claims which had arisen before 1 January 1980. In recognition of this waiver the two Governments have agreed to pay each other a sum of compensation. The Chinese Government will be paying us a total of £23,468,008 in two instalments. We will pay China a total of US\$3.8 million, also in two instalments.

The Government have decided that the whole of the balance of money remaining after the US\$3.8 million has been paid to China should be distributed amongst British private claimants. There will thus be a sum in excess of £20 million for the private claimants. The Government have waived their entitlement to share in this money in respect of their own claims. All the money will be distributed to the private British claimants, both corporate and individual, or to their heirs and successors as well as to the British holders of bonds issued or guaranteed by successive former Chinese Governments prior to 1 October 1949 who acquired these bonds on or before Thursday 4 June 1987.

A cut-off date of Thursday 4 June 1987 has been set on which bond holders must show that they held British nationality. This has been done in order to avoid transfer of the bonds from foreign to British hands. British bond holders who wish to share in this distribution will be required to make a formal statutory declaration that they had acquired the bonds on or before Thursday 4 June 1987.

It is hoped that an Order in Council will be made shortly and laid before Parliament providing for the distribution of this China fund.

Foreign Affairs Councils

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Councils held on 25 and 26 May and 22 and 23 June.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended the Foreign Affairs Council which took place in Brussels on 25-26 May and Luxembourg on 22-23 June. The May Council was preceded by a meeting of Ministers in political co-operation at which the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve reviewed the situation in South Africa and issued a statement. In the light of the report of the experts sent to the region by the UN Secretary General, Ministers also issued a statement on the use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war. Copies of both statements have been deposited in the Library of the House.

On both occasions the Council discussed the Commission's proposals for the future financing of the Community. My right hon. and learned Friend stressed

that the key to solving the Community's financial problems was better control of expenditure, especially agricultural expenditure. Foreign Ministers will have further discussions in advance of the European Council at a special meeting on 27-28 June.

The Council agreed a decision on the delegation to the Commission of powers for the implementation of measures adopted by the Council.

The Council discussed trade relations between the Community and Japan. It approved Commission proposals for a negotiating mandate in the GATT article XXIV.6 negotiations to ensure that the enlargement of the Community does not increase the imbalance of advantages between the two trading partners; and for an amendment to the Community's anti-dumping regulations to prevent circumvention of the rules by assembly operations with imported components. It also invited the Commission to make proposals for tariffs on Japanese exports diverted from the United States, should these be shown to be damaging or threaten the interests of Community producers.

In the light of the US Congressional debate on trade legislation, the Council reaffirmed the Community's determination to defend its interests as necessary, in accordance with its GATT rights. It gave its full support to the intention of Commissioners de Clercq and Andriessen to visit Washington next month to draw attention to the dangerous consequences of protectionist legislation. The Council asked the Commission to make every effort to achieve an early settlement to the negotiations with the US on pasta export restitution.

The Council welcomed draft Commission proposals for a negotiating mandate on tropical products in the Uruguay round.

The Council adopted conclusions on the Community's relations with Latin America reflecting the importance which the Community and Twelve attach to that relationship. It agreed to proceed with the signature of protocols to the co-operation and association agreements with a number of Mediterranean countries. The additional protocols to the EC-Tunisia co-operation agreement consequent on Spanish and Portuguese accession to the Community were signed on 25 May. They were followed by the third meeting of the EC-Tunisia Co-operation Council. A ministerial meeting between representatives of the Community and Gulf Co-operation Council was held on 23 June.

The Council approved a revised Commission proposal for the second financial protocol to the EC-Yugoslavia co-operation agreement. This has now been initialled.

The Commission presented to the Council a proposal for a regime to regulate radioactive contamination in food in the event of a nuclear accident.

The Council approved directives on credit and suretyship assurance, legal expenses insurances and the mutual recognition of listing particulars.

SCOTLAND

Lord Advocate (Parliamentary Questions)

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on what arrangements he intends to adopt in respect of parliamentary questions relating to the responsibility of the Lord Advocate.

Mr. Rifkind: A Scottish Office Minister will answer questions on matters falling within the responsibilities of the Lord Advocate. Questions for oral answer will be taken during the period allocated to questions to the Secretary of State for Scotland which will now extend to 3.30 pm.

Departmental Cash Limits

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any changes will be made to his cash limits to take account of the pay settlements following the recommendations of the National Health Service review bodies.

Mr. Rifkind: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 14 (Prisons, Hospitals and Community Health Services, etc, Scotland) will be increased by £36,000,000 from £1,678,483,000 to £1,714,483,000. This increase will enable services to be maintained and follows the decision to implement, from 1 April 1987, the recommendations of the review bodies in respect of doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and professions allied to medicine, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 23 April 1987.

The public expenditure costs of these changes have been charged to the Reserve and do not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 29 June 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Security Services

49. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Attorney-General what has been the total cost to date in each of the past three years of legal attempts by Her Majesty's Government to prevent the publication of books and articles on British security services; and which foreign publications have been involved.

The Attorney-General: Over the last three years, the total cost has been about £315,000. The foreign publications concerned have been a manuscript by Mr. Peter Wright and a book "One Girl's War" by the late Joan Miller.

Seditious Conspiracy (Prosecutions)

52. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Attorney-General how many prosecutions for seditious conspiracy there have been since 1957; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: None.

Director of Public Prosecutions

54. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Attorney-General what recent meetings he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: My most recent meeting with the Director of Public Prosecutions took place on 15 June 1987. Such meetings take place frequently.

Newspapers (Appeal Costs)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what are the costs incurred to date by Her Majesty's Government in the current cases against *The Observer* and *The Guardian* newspapers; and if he will estimate the cost of the outstanding appeal.

Mr. Attorney-General: The total amount of costs expended in the current litigation with *The Observer* and *The Guardian* is £120. I cannot usefully estimate the cost of the appeal proceedings.

"Break In: Inside the Soviet Delegation"

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what consideration he gave to taking legal action to prevent the publication on 25 June of "Break In: Inside the Soviet Delegation" by Bill Graham, published by Bodley Head.

The Attorney-General: I satisfied myself that the book contains no material whose publication by Mr. Graham would have been in the breach of any duty of confidence owed to the Crown.

Trials (Committal Times)

Mr. Birmingham asked the Attorney-General what was the average length of time between committal and trial in 1975, 1976, 1979, 1985 and 1986 respectively.

The Attorney-General: The average waiting time between date of committal from the magistrates court and start of trial in the Crown court in England and Wales was:

	weeks
1975	9.9
1976	11.0
1979	17.6
1985	14.0
1986	14.1

Despite an increase of 66 per cent. in the number of committals for trial to the Crown court since 1979, the above figures show that average waiting times have been reduced from well over 17 weeks to about 14 weeks.

Scheduled Offences (Northern Ireland)

The Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Attorney-General what representations have been received by him concerning current arrangements for trying scheduled offences in the courts in Northern Ireland; what changes have been called for; and if he will list the individuals and organisations concerned.

Mr. Tom King: I have been asked to reply.

I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Irradiation

Mr. Atkinson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about European Community proposals for food irradiation; and if he has any plans to ensure that treated food is labelled.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The import and sale of irradiated food in this country remains prohibited while the Government consider the advice of their independent committees, including recommendations on labelling, in the report on the safety and wholesomeness of irradiated foods, together with representations on it.

The European Commission has not yet issued any formal proposals to harmonise national laws pertaining to irradiated foods in member states. A proposal to amend the EC labelling directive would, if adopted, require the clear labelling of irradiated foods and irradiated ingredients of food marketed in the Community.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give reasons for the reduction in places on the community programmes in Leicester.

Mr. Lee: The community programme will provide jobs for some 300,000 people in 1987-88, the same number as 1986-87. The programme will operate at an average level of 245,000 filled places over the year and will be focused more closely on areas of high unemployment. This has

meant some shifts in provision and Leicester now has an average filled place allocation of 2,403 places compared to 2,591 for 1986-87.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many reductions in community programme places have taken place in Leicestershire; and to which projects they apply.

Mr. Lee: At 31 March, the number of filled community programme places in Leicester was 1,879. The average level of filled places allocated for 1987-88 financial year is 1,845. Figures on the same basis for agencies and independent sponsors in Leicester are:

Name of agent/sponsor	Filled at 31 March 1987	Allocated filled places 1987-88
Leicester County Council Agency ¹	410	405
NACRO National Agency	139	148
CTF National Agency ¹	156	153
Birstall Action Team	26	25
Highfield Rangers	30	28
Leicester Council of Churches	19	18
University of Leicester—Community Health	10	8
University of Leicester—Cultural Heritage	18	12
Age Concern National Agency ¹	226	222
Leicester City Council Agency	203	188
Leicester and County Chamber of Commerce Agency	398	400
National Elfrida Rathbone National Agency ¹	66	65
Keep Britain Tidy National Agency	7	9
Leicester Sound (part of Community Service Volunteers National Agency)	9	10
Leicester Diocesan Board ¹	27	27
Leicester and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation	27	—
Nirankari Advice Centre	10	10
Leicester Rural Community Council Agency ¹	78	72
Leicester Association for the Disabled	20	22

Note: The projects and agencies marked ¹ have places operating outside the city of Leicester. These are included in the figures quoted.

YTS (Benefits)

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people under the age of 18 years in Leeds, West constituency and Leeds metropolitan district council area will be affected by the proposed legislation to withhold benefit from those who refuse a YTS place.

Mr. Lee: No decision has yet been taken on the timing or coverage of the Government's proposals affecting supplementary benefit for young people under the age of 18, and it is not possible to give estimates of the numbers who will choose to be unemployed in the Leeds, West or Leeds metropolitan areas.

Wage Rates

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to introduce a minimum wage in line with the Council of Europe's decency threshold; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No. A national minimum wage would raise employers' costs and threaten jobs, including the jobs

of those it was designed to help. Moreover, there is no such thing as a Council of Europe threshold for a minimum acceptable level of earnings. None has ever been endorsed either by any member state of the Council of Europe or by the governmental committee on the European Social Charter.

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of adults in Leeds, West constituency whose wages are below the Council of Europe's decency threshold recommendations.

Mr. Lee: There is no such thing as a Council of Europe decency threshold recommendation on a minimum acceptable level of earnings. None has ever been endorsed either by any member state of the Council of Europe or by its governmental committee on the European Social Charter.

Estimates of the numbers of employees by level of earnings are not available for individual parliamentary constituencies.

Mrs. Mahon asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether the extent of the low-pay problem in West-Yorkshire is in breach of the Council of Europe's European social charter.

Mr. Nicholls: The European Social Charter does not specify any level of earnings which should be regarded as an acceptable minimum.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of people unemployed in the Leeds, West constituency by sex and who are (a) under 25 years, (b) between 25 years and 35 years, (c) between 35 and 50 years and (d) over 50 years.

Mr. Lee: The following information is available in the Library.

Unemployed Claimants—Leeds, West parliamentary constituency, 9 April 1987

	Males	Females
Aged under 25	1,212	670
25-34	1,016	379
35-49	864	309
Over 50	760	245

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Chapeltown Task Force

Mr. Fatchett asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much money was spent by the Chapeltown task force in Leeds for the year 1986-87; what is estimated expenditure for the current financial year; and how many jobs have been created.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: During 1986-87, the task force committed £750,000 of top-up funds to support projects, funded by the public and private sectors, totalling some £2.25 million. These projects include support for

- (a) Positive Action for Training in Housing (PATH), a 12-month training scheme aimed at increasing employment opportunities in business and financial services, including housing management;
- (b) Jamaica Society Leeds, creating three employment and training programmes in the task force area, including the first employer-led YTS in that area.

(c) Community Enterprise Trust, a large project drawing together the private sector, local community, Government Departments and city council. The project involves the acquisition and refurbishment of two buildings to provide a wide range of employment and training opportunities, including enterprise training and starter units.

(d) A development fund in partnership with the Yorkshire bank, providing small grants and loans to local businesses.

During 1987-88, the task force is working up a number of initiatives which are expected to involve committing some £4.5 million from public and private funds, including around £1.25 million from the task force top-up funds.

A principal aim of the task forces is to make it easier for residents in their areas to get jobs. It is not, however, possible to measure total net jobs in the task force areas with any accuracy. Any estimate would not only have to take into account new jobs specifically associated with task force projects, but also jobs associated with business start ups, jobs in firms helped by task force development funds, jobs created in agencies funded by the inner cities initiative and jobs gained by residents as a result of training courses facilitated by the initiative. We have not therefore yet attempted such an overall estimate.

Generating Set Manufacturers

Mr. Latham asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he intends to take arising out of the concern expressed to his Department by representatives of the British generating set manufacturers about grants paid from public sources to a company based in Northern Ireland; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I am urgently considering the concerns that have been raised and will be writing to my hon. Friend on this matter shortly.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Billinge Hospital (Maternity Wing)

Mr. McCartney asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which patients at the Roy Hartley maternity wing of Billinge hospital situated in the Wigan health authority are being required to provide their own nappies; and what steps are being taken to ensure that the previous free supply of nappies is resumed.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that the Wigan health authority was one of the few health authorities without a definite policy on the matter on the provision of disposable nappies to the mothers of newborn babies. In the absence of a policy, nappies were provided for the complete period of stay in hospital.

The change of policy means that disposable nappies are provided for the first 24 hours only, after which the parents are required to provide nappies themselves for their child. Cases of hardship are dealt with on an individual basis.

This follows a recommendation from the midwifery sections of the English National Board that local arrangements for the supply of nappies be reviewed. The new policy is in line with the policy followed by many health authorities.

Wigan Health Authority (Laundry Service)

Mr. McCartney asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of difficulties experienced in the Wigan health authority with its existing laundry service, he will provide additional capital funds for the building of a new laundry facility for the health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: These are matters for Wigan health authority to consider. The hon. Member may wish to address his inquiries to the chairman of that authority.

Community Care (Griffiths Review)

Mr. Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the terms of reference of the Griffiths review on community care; and if he will make a statement on its progress.

Mr. Newton: Sir Roy Griffiths was asked by the then Secretary of State in December 1986

"To review the way in which public funds are used to support community care policy and to advise me on the options that would improve the use of these funds as a contribution to more effective community care".

Sir Roy was asked to complete the review within 12 months. I understand that Sir Roy is reading, meeting and visiting widely in the course of his review, gathering ideas and views from many quarters.

Benefits (Leeds)

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the Leeds, West constituency are currently in receipt of (a) supplementary benefit, (b) invalidity benefit, (c) housing benefit, (d) sickness benefit, (e) mobility allowance, and (f) maternity benefit; and how many people have received single payments in the current financial year.

Mr. Scott: The Leeds, West constituency is covered by two of the Department's local offices at Leeds, West and Leeds, North-West, but their boundaries are not conterminous. The table shows the number of people receiving benefit from those offices on the latest date for which information is available:—

	at 5 May 1987	at 2 June 1987
Supplementary Benefit	*27,739	—
Invalidity and Sickness Benefit	—	5,549
Maternity Benefit	—	379

* Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

In the period from 8 April 1987 to 2 June 1987, there have been 22,209 awards of single payments.

I regret that information about mobility allowance is not available and that the only available information on housing benefit relates to the entire Leeds city council area, and cannot be disaggregated by constituency.

Medical Assessment (Waiting Lists)

Mrs. Mahon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people nationally are on waiting lists for medical assessments to enable them to move into suitable homes.

Mrs. Currie: Information about medical assessment of people for residential or nursing home care is not collected centrally. We are not aware of significant delays in admission for this reason.

District Health Authorities (Pay Awards)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the cost to each district health authority in each year since 1982 of meeting the cost of pay awards not fully funded by central Government.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not available centrally.

Disablement Services Authority

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will announce the membership of the Disablement Services Authority.

Mr. Scott: My predecessor announced (10 March 1987, at column 149) that my right hon. and noble Friend, Lord Holderness, had agreed to serve as chairman of the authority, and that Professor Ian McColl had agreed to serve as vice-chairman. I am delighted to have this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to these two distinguished men for taking on this task.

I have appointed seven further members of the authority, and I am grateful to them for accepting the challenging but worthwhile task that lies before the authority over the next few years. They are as follows:

Mr. S. Ingham, District General Manager, York Health Authority;
Mr. D. F. Johnson, Former Managing Director, Thorn EMI (Retail) Ltd.;
Professor E. A. Marsland, Former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham;
Professor D. L. McLellan, Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine, Southampton General Hospital;
Professor B. E. Tomlinson, Chairman, Northern Regional Health Authority;
Mrs. B. Warren, Chairman, College of Occupational Therapists;
Dr. J. Watkinson, Former Chief Executive, Otis Elevator plc.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Research Councils

59. Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the work of his Department with the agriculture and medical research councils.

Mr. Chris Patten: The ODA finances research of relevance to developing countries in the institutions of the Agricultural Research Council and through the Medical Research Council's tropical medicine research board.

Immunisation Programme

61. Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's contribution to the UNICEF global immunisation programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the last financial year, we gave £5.31 million for immunisation programmes in China, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Botswana. Our total contribution to UNICEF was £13.07 million.

Brundtland Report

62. Mr. Matthew Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's aid programme of the conclusions of the United Nation's Brundtland report entitled "Our Common Future — World Commission on Environment and Development", a copy of which has been sent to him

Mr. Chris Patten: The Brundtland report confirms our existing strategy, which combines the pursuit of sustainable economic growth with a concern for the environment.

AIDS

63. Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance his Department is giving to help combat AIDS in developing countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: Subject to parliamentary approval, we will contribute £3 million this year to the World Health Organisation's special programme on AIDS. We will also provide about £1.6 million, over three years, to the International Planned Parenthood Federation to help develop its AIDS work.

64. Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's estimate of the number of deaths from AIDS in Africa over the next 10 years.

Mr. Chris Patten: It is impossible to determine the scope of the disease in Africa because it is often under-diagnosed, facilities for testing for the disease are not yet widespread, and systems for reporting AIDS cases are in the early stages of development.

Bangladesh

65. Mr. Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to change the level and range of the British aid programme to Bangladesh.

Mr. Chris Patten: Bangladesh is now the second largest recipient of British aid. In April, we pledged a new £10 million commodity aid grant which will enable us to maintain the overall level of our aid of around £40 million in the current financial year. The programme finances technical co-operation, projects in priority sectors and the supply of essential imports. The level and scope of our aid to all countries, including Bangladesh, is kept under constant review.

India

66. Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much he expects to allocate as aid to India during the next 12 months.

Mr. Chris Patten: Last financial year we spent £111 million on bilateral aid to India. In addition, we provided over £6 million from the aid and trade provision. It is too early to predict the level of spending for the current financial year. We have, however, encouraged the Indians, most recently at the meeting of the India Consortium earlier this month, to put forward further proposals to strengthen the project pipeline.

Uganda

67. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to provide further assistance to Uganda.

Mr. Chris Patten: At a recent World Bank meeting of aid donors to Uganda, we pledged £25 million in balance of payments support over the next two years. This is on grant terms and is linked to the maintenance by Uganda of the economic recovery programme agreed with the IMF.

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation

68. **Mr. Couchman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the choice of candidate for the position of executive director of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation when the appointment comes up for election later this year.

Mr. Chris Patten: I made public the Government's support for the candidature of Mr. Moise Christophe Mensah, during my speech to the Royal Commonwealth Society on 28 April.

St. Helena (Replacement Vessel)

69. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects a contract to be awarded to a United Kingdom shipyard for the construction of a replacement vessel for the St. Helena service.

Mr. Chris Patten: Tender documents have been issued to a number of shipbuilding firms which are preparing bids for the construction of the vessel. The closing date for receipt of bids is 3 August. A contract will be awarded by the St. Helena Government as soon as possible thereafter.

Mozambique

70. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions have been taken by Her Majesty's Government to relieve the situation in Mozambique.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have committed nearly £14 million in emergency aid for Mozambique so far this year, including a pledge of up to 30,000 tonnes of cereals. In addition our share of emergency and food aid provided by the European Community this year amounts to nearly £3 million.

71. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British aid to Mozambique.

Mr. Chris Patten: Our aid programme to Mozambique has increased substantially in recent years. We have committed nearly £34 million in capital aid and emergency assistance in 1987. Our aid also includes technical co-operation and training programmes; Mozambique additionally benefits from our assistance to projects sponsored by the Southern Africa development co-ordination conference.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what terms the Commonwealth Development Corporation receives loans from the aid programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: It has been decided that from 1987-88, loans to the corporation from the aid programme should be at 3.5 per cent. interest and repayable over 25 years with a seven year grace period.

Pakistan

73. **Mr. Burt** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Government have for future assistance to Pakistan.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have a substantial and growing aid programme to Pakistan, concentrated in sectors to which the Government of Pakistan attach high priority.

In April I had discussions in London with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Mohammad Khan Junejo, and we agreed that the future programme would focus on irrigation and land drainage, agricultural development, power supply, primary health care (including population, welfare and water supply and sanitation) and education. Particular efforts will be made to direct assistance to benefit the rural poor.

Indonesia

74. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the aid Britain is planning to provide to Indonesia.

Mr. Chris Patten: Allocations totalling £21 million have been agreed for two projects for financing from the 1986 £140 million concessional loan to Indonesia. It is intended that the balance of £119 million will be allocated over the coming year to a number of projects which are already under negotiation. In addition, expenditure on technical co-operation, financial aid and debt relief is expected to exceed £10 million in the present financial year.

Afghanistan

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value of the aid Her Majesty's Government gave to Afghanistan between 1985 and 1987.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have no bilateral aid programme to Afghanistan, though we provide humanitarian assistance for Afghan refugees, mainly through the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and British and international voluntary agencies. The amounts provided for Afghan refugees in Pakistan in 1985-86 and 1986-87 were £4.47 million and £4.8 million respectively, and to Afghan refugees in Iran £0.1 million and £0.2 million. The British share of European Community aid to Afghan refugees was estimated at £1.11 million in 1985 and £2.49 millions in 1986.

Tuvalu

Mr. Simon Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has

been made in establishing an international trust fund to provide Tuvalu with revenue to meet its recurrent expenditure.

Mr. Chris Patten: An agreement to establish the trust fund was signed in Suva on 16 June by representatives of the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, Tuvalu and the United Kingdom. A copy was laid before the House on 25 June. After ratification, we intend to make a contribution to the fund of 8.5 million Australian dollars, approximately £3.86 million at current rates of exchange.

Aid Programme

72. Mr. Salmond asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department has any target date for increasing United Kingdom overseas aid to match United Nations guidelines as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government accept in principle the UN target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for official development assistance but are not committed to a timetable for achieving it. We have achieved the UN target of 1 per cent. for official and private flows combined in every year since 1979, except 1985.

Mr. Bowis asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the amounts of net official development assistance, and net official and private flows combined, that the United Kingdom provided to developing countries in 1986, as a percentage of gross national product.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1986, Britain provided net official development assistance equivalent to 0.32 per cent. of GNP. For net official and private flows combined the provisional estimate is 1.34 per cent. of GNP.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Wembley Conference Centre (Policing)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Metropolitan Police Commissioner as to how many police officers were on duty inside the Wembley conference centre on 7 June; what was the total cost involved; and who was responsible for the costs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that none of the 111 officers assigned to duties in connection with this event was deployed inside the Wembley conference centre.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many police officers were involved in security operations surrounding the Prime Minister's visit to the Wembley conference centre on 7 June; how much the operation cost; what was the contribution made by the Conservative party; and how many people were arrested.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that 111 police officers were assigned to duties in connection with the Prime Minister's visit to the Wembley conference centre. The additional cost to the Metropolitan Police was about

£2,000. As is always the case with such operations, no charge was made to the organisers of the event. No arrests were made arising directly from the event.

Mr. Alex Lawrie

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the search of the house in Cheltenham of Mr. Alex Lawrie of GCHQ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: No. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis will, when his inquiries are complete, report to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Amusement Arcades

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Government have any plans to impose a legal duty upon owners of amusement arcades to prohibit persons under the age of 16 years from entering.

Mr. John Patten: We have begun a research project examining the extent of the use which young people make of amusement machines in arcades and other places, whether there are signs that they become addicted to playing the machines found there and whether there is evidence of machines leading to anti-social behaviour or criminal behaviour. It is hoped that this and other research, will be completed by early next year. We will then take a view on whether there should be a change in the law.

Crime (Clear-up Rates)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many years clear-up rates for crime have been centrally collected; and if he will give the figures for the national clear-up rate for each year for which figures are available up to 1986.

Mr. John Patten: Clear-up rates have been published in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1950" and in the corresponding volumes for subsequent years up to 1985. The 1950 volume included figures for 1938, 1948, and 1949, and the 1986 figure is published in a Home Office statistical bulletin issue number 4/87 (table 5).

Indictable Offences

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give figures for the proportion of offenders convicted of indictable offences who were sentenced to immediate custody for each year since 1957.

Mr. John Patten: Information for 1975 to 1985 is published in "Criminal Statistics; England and Wales, 1985" (Cm. 10) at table 7.4. Information for years prior to 1975 is as follows. Statistics for 1986 are not yet available.

*Percentage of offenders sentenced for indictable offences at all courts given immediate custody
England and Wales 1957-74*

Year	Percentage sentenced to immediate custody
1957	17.3
1958	17.3

Year	Percentage sentenced to immediate custody
1959	17.6
1960	16.8
1961	16.5
1962	16.6
1963	16.1
1964	15.8
1965	15.6
1966	14.6
1967	13.4
1968	13.0
1969	13.3
1970	14.2
1971	13.9
1972	13.3
1973	12.1
1974	11.8

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of offenders convicted of indictable offences received community service orders, probation orders and fines, respectively, in 1986.

Mr. John Patten: Information for 1985 and earlier years is published in "Criminal Statistics; England and Wales, 1985" (Cm. 10) at table 7.4. Statistics for 1986 are not yet available.

Prisons

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional new prisons were announced between April 1986 and March 1987.

Mr. John Patten: Four additional new prisons were announced between April 1986 and March 1987. Under the prison building programme, three prisons have been completed and 17 are under construction or at the design stage.

Kidnap Insurance

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will institute an inquiry into the incidence of senior police officers seeking appointments, prior to their retirement, to the board of, or as consultants to, Control Risks, a firm specialising in kidnap insurance, with a view to establishing whether this practice is in the public interest.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to prohibit serving or retired police officers from taking up appointments to the board of, or as consultants to, commercial organisations specialising in kidnap insurance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Passports Applications

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on staff shortages at the passport office in Glasgow in relation to delays in passport applications.

Mr. Tim Renton: Delays in dealing with passport applications at the Glasgow passport office have been

caused by industrial action rather than staff shortages. There are 108 staff in post, 25 above the normal permanent complement and seven more than the number in post at the end of June last year (temporary staff are recruited each year to deal with the seasonal rise in demand). Since 15 April this year, 393 man days have been lost at the Glasgow passport office through strike action over Civil Service pay.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Freshwater Biology

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to implement the commitment to environmental research, with particular reference to freshwater biology, expressed in their response to the World Conservation Strategy report, contained in the document, "Conservation and Development — The British Approach"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Natural Environment Research Council has responsibility for planning, encouraging and carrying out research on the natural environment. It is funded by my Department through grant in aid from the science budget, and by other Departments and other customers for specific pieces of work. Within the resources available to it, the council has to determine the allocation to freshwater biology and other priority areas. The council's plans for research in the area of conservation are given in section 4D of its 1987 corporate plan, copies of which are in the Library. Paragraph 4.31 concerns freshwater studies, but such studies are also included in other aspects of the council's work.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what priority Her Majesty's Government attach within their overall research programme to research into freshwater biology, with particular reference to river management, pollution assessment and nature conservation; how this priority is reflected in the current and projected level of funding from Government sources for this area of research; what representations he has received about the level of funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Research into freshwater biology, with other environmental issues, is among a range of priority areas funded from within the resources available. Forty letters on this matter have been received from right hon. and hon. Members and a further 50 from members of the Freshwater Biological Association, the staff of its laboratories and the general public.

Teachers (Vetting)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidelines he has issued to local authorities about the use, before they consider any applicant for a teaching post, of police vetting and of the disclosure in writing of any criminal convictions, bind-over orders or cautions.

Mrs. Rumbold: In July 1986, a circular was issued jointly by the Home Office, the Department of Health and Social Security, the Welsh Office and the Department of Education and Science on "Protection of Children: Disclosure of Criminal Background of those with access

to Children". It gave guidance to local authorities on new procedures for checking with local police forces the possible criminal background of those who apply or move to work with children. The circular was only issued after wide consultation with bodies representing local authorities, unions, parents, voluntary organisations and educational institutions. A copy was placed in the Library of the House.

Nursery School (Halifax)

Mrs. Alice Mahon asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the proposed closure of the only nursery school in Halifax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: None. I understand from Calderdale local education authority that proposals for the future of the Ling Bob nursery school are currently being discussed at local level.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Waterside Hospital, Derry

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining what plans he has for the replacement of Waterside general hospital in Derry.

Mr. Needham: The Western health and social services board has set in hand initial preparatory work on a scheme for the replacement of Waterside hospital. This proposal will enable the board to carry out the recommendation of the Northern Ireland Hospital Advisory Service and to replace entirely unsatisfactory accommodation for geriatric patients. An investment appraisal will be required, and when this is completed, a scheme, which is expected to cost about £2.5 million, will be admitted to the capital development programme.

Altnagelvin Hospital, Derry

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining what plans the Government have regarding the improvement of provision at Altnagelvin hospital in Derry.

Mr. Needham: The Western health and social services board has submitted outline proposals for a range of improvements at Altnagelvin hospital. These proposals, which are estimated to cost about £5 million, will facilitate the board's strategy for the development of acute hospital services in its area. The board has already set in hand initial planning work and the preparation of an investment appraisal which is required for schemes of this size. Subject to a satisfactory outcome to this exercise, the scheme will be admitted to the capital development programme.

Shorts (Surface-to-air Missiles)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds he has given to Shorts of Belfast in relation to the development of surface-to-air missiles.

Mr. Viggers: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will place in the Library minutes of the proceedings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and papers prepared by its secretariat;

(2) what views and proposals have been put forward within the Anglo-Irish Agreement by the Government of the Republic since 15 November 1985; and what has been the response of Her Majesty's Government to these proposals;

(3) on how many occasions since 15 November 1985 the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference has met; what were the dates and locations of such meetings; and from what Department's Ministers and officials attending such meetings came.

Mr. Tom King: There have been 10 full ministerial meetings of the conference, and two more of which I and the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Ireland were co-chairmen. Joint statements, issued after each meeting, and placed in the Library, set out details of their dates and locations, those who attended, and the subjects discussed.

As is customary with communications between Governments, it has not been our practice to make public further details of the discussions, or of papers passed through the secretariat, but I am of course willing to discuss all issues of Government policy with the elected representatives of any of the constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland, including those that have been discussed at the Intergovernmental Conference, or are identified in a joint statement as being for discussion at a future meeting.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the cost so far to public funds of the secretariat of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental Conference; how many civil servants are employed there; what functions they perform; and on which Vote this expenditure falls.

Mr. Stanley: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in what ways the Anglo-Irish Agreement has contributed to peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland since 15 November 1985.

Mr. Stanley: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Road Fund Licence (Fines)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland in the last three years for which figures are available have been imprisoned for not paying a fine imposed by a court for failure to display a road fund licence; and what information he has as to how many such fines are outstanding at present.

Mr. Stanley: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Blowpipe

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister (1) what machinery exists to monitor the efficacy of end-users' certificates in relation to the export of Blowpipe missiles to Afghanistan;

(2) if she will specify the circumstances in which Her Majesty's Government insist on the inclusion of transfer clauses in arms sales agreements with United States governmental agencies or citizens; and if she will list each such occasion since 1 January 1985 and the weapon system involved in each case;

(3) if she will list each country or person in respect of which Her Majesty's Government have authorised the supply of Blowpipe surface-to-air missiles, if she will specify the steps taken in each case to ensure that the missiles did not fall into unauthorised hands; and what information she has as to whether any Blowpipe missiles have been passed on by their authorised recipients in breach of the relevant end-user certificates.

The Prime Minister: It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to comment on matters of this kind.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what information Her Majesty's Government have about the use of Blowpipe missiles in Nicaragua and as to the sources, direct or indirect of those weapons.

The Prime Minister: I am advised that there is no evidence of the presence or use of Blowpipe missiles in Nicaragua. The United States Government have assured us that there are no Blowpipe missiles in Contra hands and that they have no intention to supply them.

Peter Wright

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will now make a statement on progress of Her Majesty's Government's case in the Australian courts in relation to Peter Wright's memoirs.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on 29 June 1987.

Mr. Colin Wallace and Mr. Fred Holroyd

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will now refer to the Security Commission the cases of Mr. Colin Wallace and Mr. Fred Holroyd, the circumstances of their resignations from Crown Service, and any payments made to them then or subsequently by the Government.

The Prime Minister: No.

Zircon Satellite

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will establish an inquiry into the circumstances of the publication of information on the Zircon satellite and the search of the BBC premises in Glasgow in February.

The Prime Minister: I am advised that the police investigation which started in January is continuing, and the matter is being considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions. I have no plans for any inquiry.

Cervical Cancer Tests (Liverpool)

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received from the Liverpool community health council concerning errors made by the Liverpool area health authority on cervical cancer smear tests; what reply she has sent; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: To date, I have received no representations on this matter from either of the two Liverpool community health councils.

EEC Scientific Research Programme

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what proposals she has to give Her Majesty's Government's support to the European Economic Community scientific research programme for the next five years.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom is considering this matter and has not yet replied to the presidency's request for agreement to the European Community's framework programme for research and development for 1987-1991.

Westland PLC (Correspondence)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report*, the letter to her from the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 12 April concerning her role in the affair of the Law Officer's letter in relation to Westland plc, together with her acknowledgment in reply; why the hon. Member has not yet received a substantive reply; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman wrote to me about the question he had tabled for oral answer on 30 April 1987. In my reply to his supplementary question I said that I had nothing to add to the many, many answers on that matter that I had given in statements and in replies to questions. That remains the position.

DEFENCE

Afghanistan (Missiles)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the collaboration between the United States of America and Her Majesty's Government in sending surface-to-air missiles to Afghanistan.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Nuclear Submarine Reactors

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his policy on disposal sites for decommissioned nuclear submarine reactors.

Mr. Sainsbury: No decisions have been taken about the disposal of reactor compartments from decommissioned nuclear submarines. If it were necessary to develop a site for their disposal, the House would be informed. Normal planning procedures would apply to a proposal for such a development.

Alconbury

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what action he has taken regarding the incident at

Alconbury air base on 20 August 1986 involving Mr. John Bugg and the Ministry of Defence police concerning rights of way at Alconbury.

Mr. Freeman: My Department has no knowledge of any incident taking place at RAF Alconbury on 20 August 1986. If the hon. Member would care to write to me giving further information, I will have the matter investigated.

SCOTLAND

Teachers (Vetting)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines he has issued to local authorities in Scotland about the use, before they consider any applicant for a teaching post, of police vetting and of the disclosure in writing of any criminal convictions, bind-overs and cautions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. Separate circulars will be issued shortly to social work and education authorities and to health boards setting out new procedures which it is hoped will be introduced early in 1988 to apply to all prospective employees who have substantial access to children. In the case of teachers, it will be for the General Teaching Council for Scotland to consider previous convictions when determining fitness to teach before admission to its register of teachers.

Ballachulish Bridge

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how long repair work has been in progress at the Ballachulish bridge; whether this work was necessitated by a mistake in the original construction; how long the work will take; what it will cost; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The work to which the hon. Member refers is routine maintenance involving the treatment and repainting of the steel members above the bridge deck: it has not been necessitated by any defect in the original construction of the bridge. The work started last June; was suspended in December because of adverse weather conditions; recommenced around the end of March; and is now on the point of completion. The estimated cost of the work is £250,000. It is intended to repaint the steel beams below the bridge deck next year.

Halibut

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much the Highlands and Islands Development Board has spent on the breeding of halibut; what is his policy in promoting the fish farming of halibut; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Since 1980-81 the HIDB has contributed £197,000 towards research into the cultivation of halibut. The Government have encouraged this research, which is mainly being done by the Sea Fish Industry Authority. Recent results are promising and it is hoped that within a few years a pilot project will be ready for commercial assessment.

TRANSPORT

Fares Policy

12. Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport what response his Department has made to EEC proposals relating to policy on fares in the EEC.

17. Mr. John Evans asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the EEC Transport Commissioner on policy towards fares in the European Economic Community.

31. Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the European Economic Community Transport Commissioner on policy towards fares within the European Economic Community.

34. Mr. Michael asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the European Economic Community Transport Commissioner on policy towards fares within the European Economic Community.

44. Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made towards liberalising European air fares.

Mr. Channon: At last week's Transport Council, there was unanimous agreement to a package of measures, including fares liberalisation. Regrettably, however, adoption of the measures is being held up by Spanish refusal to accept the inclusion of Gibraltar. The presidency is making strenuous efforts to find ways of getting the package adopted and we are co-operating fully with them. A further Transport Council is planned for tomorrow.

27. Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what advice on fare levels has been issued by his Department to public industries.

Mr. David Mitchell: Responsibility for determining fares lies with individual transport industries. Guidance was provided to British Rail and London Regional Transport in the published objectives we have set the chairmen.

Road Markings (Oxfordshire)

13. Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on representations he has received from Oxfordshire county council concerning road markings at trunk road box junctions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None on the national criteria.

East London Road Assessment Studies

14. Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to report on the latest stage of the east London road assessment studies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are currently considering the comments on the draft terms of reference for the second stage of the four London assessment studies. I hope to announce the final terms next month.

Lorry Weights

15. Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the harmonisation of lorry weights throughout the European Economic Community.

Mr. Channon: The United Kingdom has won a derogation from the EC directives which set overall and axle weight limits for five and six-axle lorries. So we can maintain our present weight limits. The Community has not adopted weight limits for smaller lorries. No proposals to do so are under discussion.

British Rail (Fares)

16. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards fare levels on the railways.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is the board's responsibility to determine fares. In Network SouthEast we have asked it to take greater account of the costs of provision and improvements in quality.

Manchester Airport (Rail Link)

18. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made with the rail link to Manchester airport.

Mr. David Mitchell: Applications from the passenger transport authority for Government and EEC grants towards the cost of the link are being considered.

Rear Seat Belts

19. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will introduce legislation requiring compulsory wearing of rear seat belts.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Not at present. All new cars registered from 1 April this year must be fitted with rear seat belts and/or child restraints. Our aim is to increase the voluntary use of restraints and voluntary fitting in cars which do not already have them. We will continue to press home the message that the use of seat belts saves lives.

Disabled Access Taxis

20. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from Essex Federation of Taxis regarding disabled access taxis.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am not aware of any representations from the federation on this subject.

England-Scotland (Road Links)

21. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for improved road links between England and Scotland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is the Government's intention to upgrade the A74 between the M6 and the M74 to motorway standard. This is primarily a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland with whom I maintain close co-ordination on the need for road improvements on routes between our countries.

Severn Tunnel

22. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail concerning the future of the Severn tunnel junction.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. This is a matter of management for British Rail.

Dartford Bridge

23. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people will be employed on the construction of the Dartford bridge.

Mr. Channon: The new bridge between Thurrock and Dartford will generate about 5,000 man years work. Over half the work will be in steel and steel fabrication jobs in Scotland and the north-east. The Bill to authorise construction was reintroduced on Friday last.

A1(M) (Northbound Interchange)

24. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will estimate the cost of building a northbound interchange on the A1(M) to link with the Darlington bypass to the south of Darlington.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No schemes have been investigated for the provision of a northbound interchange to the south of Darlington and no estimate of cost is available. An interchange would be costly and would include a large structure to cross the existing motorway.

British Rail

25. **Ms. Walley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the net cost to British Rail of the rationalisation of clerical and administrative staff.

Mr. David Mitchell: The details of such schemes are a management matter for the British Railways Board. But I understand that they are designed to reduce net costs.

A41 (Bypass)

26. **Mr. Page** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made towards the construction of the Berkhamsted-Hemel Hempstead-Kings Langley (A41) bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have made good progress and expect to publish the remaining orders shortly.

British Rail (Electrification)

28. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss proposed electrification schemes.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend will be meeting the chairman of British Rail on 1 July. He will be happy to discuss any new proposals the chairman may wish to raise.

Road Safety

29. **Mr. Wells** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has in hand to improve road safety.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Safer travel is a key objective of the Department's activities. This is reflected in the wide range of matters covered in the roads White Paper last April. Looking to the future, we have just completed a review of road safety with a view to directing available resources towards the most effective possible measures — existing and potential, national and local — for the

reduction of casualties. Road safety must be everybody's concern. An immediate target for action is the drinking driver. I gave details of the Department's latest campaign on drinking and driving to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) earlier today.

Greenock Container Terminal

30. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions have taken place between his Department and the Clyde Port Authority regarding the proposed closure of the Greenock container terminal.

Mr. David Mitchell: The authority has kept my officials informed of impending developments and has discussed with them and with officials of the Department of Employment, Government grant towards severance payments to registered dock workers. My noble Friend the Lord Brabazon of Tara has corresponded with the chairman of the authority, at the hon. Member's request, about the authority's decision.

Motorway Noise and Lighting

32. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations his Department has received from (a) Theydon Bois and (b) elsewhere in the Epping Forest constituency regarding additional measures against the annoyance of motorway noise and lighting.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The most recent representation we received about motorway disturbance in the Epping Forest constituency, is the one my hon. Friend made in a letter dated 21 April to me enclosing correspondence from the Epping Forest M11/M25 Impact Group. I replied on 15 May.

London Regional Transport

33 **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of London Regional Transport; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend expects to meet Sir Keith Bright on 3 July to discuss a range of matters.

Motor Vehicle Licence Duty (Evasion)

36 **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans further to reduce evasion of motor vehicle licence duty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are determined to maintain the momentum of the enforcement drive. We have just introduced new powers to help stiffen the penalties against evaders. A full programme of intensive local campaigns run in conjunction with the police has been arranged for 1987-88. Computer terminals giving direct access to DVLC's records are being installed in all local enforcement offices to improve efficiency and speed up the processing of cases.

Merchant Shipping

37 **Sir David Price** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will specify the measures which the Government intend to introduce to assist the merchant shipping industry.

Mr. David Mitchell: A merchant shipping Bill will be introduced which will seek to implement three proposals. These are: assistance with industry's training costs, and with travel costs incurred in crew changeovers in distant waters, and the establishment of a Merchant Navy Reserve. These measures will help ensure the availability of trained British seafarers in an emergency. In the interests of maritime safety, the Bill will also revise the law on ship registration, including categorisation of the shipping registers of the dependent territories.

Air Traffic Controllers

38 **Mr. Malcolm Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to increase the current level of staffing of air traffic controllers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The level of staffing of air traffic controllers is the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. We are confident that the authority will continue to employ sufficient air traffic controllers to ensure the safety of traffic flying over the United Kingdom and at the airports where it is responsible for navigation services.

Bypasses

39. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses there are in the forward programme for road construction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are over 170 bypass or relief road schemes in the road programme, 20 of which are currently under construction.

Other major road improvements which are not primarily bypasses also relieve communities of traffic.

Ferries (Safety)

40. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action his Department is taking to improve ferry safety.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) earlier today.

Light Dues

41. **Mr. Matthew Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what alteration he intends to make in the level of light dues in response to representations on the subject.

Mr. David Mitchell: The rates of light dues for 1987-88, effective since 1 June (in respect of certain fishing vessels) and since 1 April (in respect of other vessels) were set by my right hon. Friend after consultation with the industries concerned and taking full account of the points made in representations to him. I do not intend to make any alterations to them in the current financial year, but in 1988-89 I will consider such changes as may be appropriate at that time.

Drink-Driving

42. **Mr. Maples** asked the Secretary of State for Transport, what measures are being taken to discourage drinking and driving.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 1,100 people died last year as a result of drinking and driving. A key element in doing something about this appalling waste must be public attitudes. That is why we have given particular emphasis to getting across the facts and the consequences. The campaign we are launching tomorrow together with a wide range of organisations is part of a sustained approach to convey to all concerned that drinking and driving simply do not mix.

Bus Services (London)

45. **Mr. Fry** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the total deregulation of bus services in London, together with the splitting up and privatisation of London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: It remains our intention to extend the deregulation of local bus services to London in due course. There are no plans for a comprehensive privatisation of London Regional Transport.

Transport Act 1985

46. **Ms Primarolo** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been undertaken by his Department to assess the effect of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department's Transport and Road Research Laboratory is engaged in a series of national, area and case studies on the effects of the Act. A copy of its first report, published in January, is available in the Library of the House. Further reports are expected shortly.

Aircraft Noise

47. **Mr. Higgins** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he proposes to take to reduce nuisance from aircraft noise.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The ban of non noise-certificated jets on the UK register from 1.1.86 has been successful in environmental terms. It will be followed by a similar ban of foreign-registered noisy jets from the beginning of next year. We are now turning our attention to the next generation of jets, the so called "chapter 2" types, and with our partners in Europe, examining ways in which they too might be gradually phased out, starting in the mid 1990s.

The Secretary of State has used his powers to designate Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports for noise regulation purposes.

The Government have thus placed restrictions on the number and type of aircraft movements at specified hours at night at these airports. They have also made regulations to concentrate aircraft movements immediately after take-off from those airports on defined paths, chosen to avoid, as far as possible, major built-up areas. Responsibility for routes further away from airports rests with the Civil Aviation Authority.

At Heathrow and Gatwick, the Government have imposed maximum noise limits for aircraft taking off, by day and by night. Such limits will be introduced at Stansted as the airport develops.

The restrictions on aircraft movements at night at these airports apply until March 1988. The Government are considering what restrictions on such movements should

apply thereafter. As stated in the 1986 White Paper on airports policy, they do not propose to ban all night flights at these airports.

In consultation with the British Airports Authority, as it then was, the Government made noise insulation grant schemes at Heathrow and Gatwick whereby the authority paid grants to insulate living accommodation where the occupants were seriously troubled by aircraft noise. The most recent schemes ended in March 1985. The Government are reviewing the schemes and will consider corrective action if the objectives of the schemes have not been met. This review has not yet been completed. The Government will consider further whether insulation grants at designated airports should be extended to schools and hospitals, or at least to those parts where the work is particularly sensitive to aircraft noise. It will be some time before Her Majesty's Government will be able to decide, after consulting BAA and other interested parties, whether such schemes would be practicable or cost effective.

It is intended that a noise insulation grants scheme similar to those at Heathrow and Gatwick will be introduced at Stansted when passenger numbers reach 2 million passengers per year.

BAA already monitors noise in the vicinity of Heathrow and Gatwick and is working with the Department of Transport in the development of new systems for monitoring noise and track-keeping in the vicinity of those airports. It is intended that similar systems will be introduced at Stansted.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

World University of the Air

75. **Sir Brandon Rhys Williams** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what study his Department has given to the project for a world university of the air as a development of the BBC external services and the Open University; and if he will make it his policy to propose that the project should be sponsored by the EEC as an extension of the Lomé convention.

Mr. Eggar: We are aware of the potential opportunities offered by satellite broadcasting. We are considering these carefully. There is currently no provision in the grants in aid of the BBC external services for a world university of the air project. We shall consider whether this could be pursued under EC sponsorship.

Chile

Mr. Delyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what purpose General Matthei of Chile came to the United Kingdom in June 1987; and if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's discussions on arms sales with him.

Mr. Eggar: General Matthei visited the United Kingdom privately in June 1987. No official discussions were held.

Afghanistan

Mr. Delyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify the United

Nations resolutions which form the basis of the United Nations Secretary General's efforts to find a solution to the conflict in Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: There have been eight such United Nations General Assembly resolutions since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, setting out the principles for a negotiated political settlement. The most recent (41/33 of 20 November 1986) was adopted by 122-20-11.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's help to (a) the Islamic Party of Yunis Khalis and (b) Field Commander Abdul Haq in Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: We admire the courageous efforts of the Afghan people to resist brutal foreign occupation. Our invitations to Yunis Khalis and Abdul Haq to visit Britain reflected our support of the right of the Afghan people to self-determination. Since 1980, we have given £45 million of humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees through British and international relief agencies.

ENVIRONMENT

Residuary Bodies

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the specific matters raised at the 18 meetings held between Ministers and the London residuary body since 1 May 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Matters discussed at meetings between Ministers and the LRB since 1 May 1986 were those relevant to the LRB's functions under the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by each of the residuary bodies in respect of the disposal of county halls for the former Greater London council, West Yorkshire county council, Greater Manchester county council, Merseyside county council, Tyne and Wear and West Midlands county council.

Mr. Chope: Contracts have been exchanged for the sale to the Greater Manchester passenger transport executive of the freehold of the Greater Manchester county hall annex. The West Yorkshire residuary body has accepted an offer, subject to contract, from Wakefield district council for the freehold of county hall, Wakefield. Residuary bodies are continuing to market their respective interests in the other county halls.

London Marathon

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been paid or is due from the London marathon to his Department in respect of the 1987 London marathon.

Mr. Moynihan: Net costs are as follows:
1987 £880-00 (still to be charged).

Thamesmead

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current position in respect of the transfer of Thamesmead to the Thamesmead trust.

Mrs. Roe: The transfer would have taken place by 18 May, following the issue on 11 May by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of a direction under section 65 of the Local Government Act 1985, but for the fact that the London borough of Camden challenged the validity of the direction. The consequent judicial review was heard between 17 and 22 June and we are now awaiting judgment which is expected early in July.

Housing Investment Programme

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing investment programme allocations made to each London borough, metropolitan district and non-metropolitan district in each of the years from 1978-79 to 1987-88, expressed in constant 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Ridley: A table listing the housing investment programme allocations made for all housing authorities in England for each of the years 1978-79 to 1987-88 at 1987-88 constant prices has been placed in the library.

Since 1981-82 local authorities have been able to supplement their allocations by expenditure financed from capital receipts. Nationally, over half of local authorities' capital expenditure in 1987-88 is expected to be financed from capital receipts.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total of all housing investment programme bids for 1978-88 submitted by English housing authorities; and what were the comparable figures for each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Ridley: In their housing investment programme submissions local authorities set out their proposals for their total capital expenditure programme in the relevant year. The figures are therefore intended to cover not only expenditure financed from allocations, but the very considerable amount of expenditure financed from other sources. The totals of proposed programmes for the years 1978-79 to 1987-88 have been as follows:

	Proposed programmes ¹ £ million (cash)
1978-79	3966
1979-80	3870
1980-81	4580
1981-82	3700
1982-83	3475
1983-84	3559
1984-85	4481
1985-86	4868
1986-87	5416
1987-88	5752

¹ excludes non-prescribed expenditure.

Housing

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list for each housing authority in England the latest figures for the number of dwellings classed as difficult to let, indicating the percentage this figure represents of the authority-owned stock; and what are the changes in these figures since April 1986;

(2) if he will list in descending order the numbers of dwellings owned by each English local housing authority, as at 1 April 1987, showing the comparable figure for 1 April 1986;

(3) if he will list for each housing authority the latest figures for (a) the number of unfit dwellings, (b) the number of dwellings fit but lacking basic amenities and (c) the number of non-standard dwellings in need of renovation, indicating in each case the percentage of total stock affected and the percentage change from the same date in 1986.

Mr. Ridley: The latest available figures are those for April 1986 provided by local authorities in their 1986 housing investment programme returns.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the total number of homes which he estimates were available to rent in England (a) from local authorities, (b) from housing organisations, (c) from other public authorities, (d) from private landlords and (e) in total in each of the years from 1957 to 1987 respectively.

Mr. Ridley: The available estimates are:

Stock of rented dwellings: England

Thousands of dwellings

	Rented from:		Total rented stock
	LAs and NTs	HAs Private owners and other tenures ¹	
April 1961	3,339	4,424	7,763
December 1966	4,016	3,683	7,699
December 1967	4,145	3,569	7,714
December 1968	4,267	3,455	7,722
December 1969	4,390	3,354	7,744
December 1970	4,506	3,202	7,708
December 1971	4,587	3,122	7,709
December 1972	4,605	3,013	7,618
December 1973	4,635	2,911	7,546
December 1974	4,743	2,811	7,554
December 1975	4,872	2,707	7,579
December 1976	4,990	277 2,342	7,609
December 1977	5,096	310 2,237	7,643
December 1978	5,157	337 2,139	7,633
December 1979	5,187	362 2,042	7,591
December 1980	5,171	389 1,952	7,512
December 1981	5,117	411 1,876	7,404
December 1982	4,952	432 1,799	7,183
December 1983	4,837	451 1,726	7,014
December 1984	4,755	474 1,656	6,885
December 1985	4,677	493 1,587	6,757
December 1986 ²	4,606	507 1,516	6,629
March 1987 ²	4,579	509 1,498	6,586

Note: For statistical purposes the stock estimates are expressed to the nearest thousand, but should not be regarded as accurate to the last digit. Estimates are based on data from the censuses of 1961 to 1981 and those for the years before 1971 are not strictly comparable.

¹ "Private owners and other tenures" include dwellings occupied by virtue of employment whether in public or private ownership, and before 1976 included housing associations.

² Provisional.

Prime Minister (Cars)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what cars are currently at the disposal of the Prime Minister; and what is the estimated cost of her new specially adapted Daimler XJ6.

Mr. Chope: The Prime Minister currently has one Daimler Sovereign at her disposal. A further Daimler Sovereign and a Rover 3500 SDI are allocated to the No. 10 office as fixed duty cars.

There is no specially adapted Daimler XJ6 on order for the Prime Minister.

Rates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the environment if he will publish the overall average unrebated domestic rate bill paid by householders in (a) England and (b) England and Wales in each year since 1966-67.

Mr. Ridley: The estimated figures are as follows:

Average (unrebated) domestic rate bills¹

	England	England and Wales
	£	£
1966-67	41	40
1967-68	41	41
1968-69	42	42
1969-70	44	44
1970-71	47	46
1971-72	54	53
1972-73	61	60
1973-74	66	66
²		
1974-75	77	74
1975-76	94	92
1976-77	103	100
1977-78	119	116
1978-79	131	128

	England	England and Wales
	£	£
1979-80	155	152
1980-81	199	195
1981-82	245	239
1982-83	282	276
1983-84	303	296
1984-85	323	316
1985-86	351	344
1986-87	401	392
1987-88 ³	428	419

Notes:

¹ Average unrebated rate bills are derived from average domestic rateable values per hereditament and the average domestic rate poundages levied by local authorities.

² Figures up to 1973-74 are not compatible with those for 1974-75 and later years. This is due to the change of local authorities' responsibilities in 1974, in particular the transfer of water and sewerage services from local authorities to water authorities.

³ The figures for 1987-88 are provisional.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the accumulated reduction in rate support grant since 1978-79 in England at 1987-88 prices breaking down the figures between (a) 1978-79 and 1979-80, (b) 1979-80 and 1980-81, (c) 1978-79 and 1981-82, (d) 1978-79 and 1982-83, (e) 1978-79 and 1983-84, (f) 1978-79 and 1984-85, (g) 1978-79 and 1985-86, (h) 1978-79 and 1986-87 and (i) 1978-79 and 1987-88.

Mr. Ridley: The accumulated reduction in rate support grant since 1978-89 in England at 1987-88 prices is £3,896.2 million. The figures are broken down in the way requested in the following table:

	£ million
(a)	535.1
(b)	658.0
(c)	1,337.5
(d)	2,127.9
(e)	2,550.2
(f)	2,971.4
(g)	3,538.7
(h)	3,958.6
(i)	3,896.2

Notes:

(i) For 1978-79 to 1980-81 rate support grant comprised needs and resources elements and domestic rate relief grant.

(ii) From 1981-82, rate support grant comprises block grant and domestic rate relief grant.

(iii) Rate support grant for the years 1978-79 to 1982-83 are final entitlements. Domestic rate relief grant for 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 are also final entitlements; those for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are first estimates. Block grant figures for 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 are entitlements after hold-back based upon provisional outturn; those for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are entitlements based on budgets.

(iv) Figures are expressed in 1987-88 prices using the DGP deflator.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of rate support grant paid in each of the years from 1978-79 to 1987-88, estimated, expressed in constant 1987-88 prices, to (a) each London borough, (b) each metropolitan district, (c) the Inner London education authority, (d) each of the former metropolitan counties and the Greater London council to 1985-86, (e) each non-metropolitan county, (f) each non-metropolitan district and (g) each of the metropolitan joint boards, showing also in each year the total paid to the respective classes of authorities.

Mr. Ridley: The figures requested have been placed in the Library. The basis for payment of rate support grant was changed in 1981. Figures for 1979-80—1980-81 are therefore not comparable with later years. In particular, prior to 1981, non-metropolitan counties received needs elements only, non-metropolitan districts received resources element and domestic rate relief grant only. No RSG was paid to metropolitan counties or precepting authorities in London.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what, assuming the full replacement of rates by the community charge and the implementation of the proposals in "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714), for non-domestic rates and the grant system, in 1987-88 (a) for England, (b) for each class of local authority and (c) for each local authority, showing precepting authorities separately what the following items in £ per adult would be (i) the community charge without safety net, (ii) the safety net, (iii) needs grant, (iv) standard grant and (v) redistributed non-domestic rate revenue, showing also the corresponding 1987-88 domestic rate poundage and, in £ per adult, the average rate bill and local authority expenditure;

(2) what, assuming the full replacement of rates by the community charge and the implementation of the proposals in "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714), for non-domestic rates and the grant system, in 1987-88, what the national non-domestic rate poundage would be in England and for each authority, and the percentage difference between the actual non-domestic poundage and the national non-domestic rate poundage.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed in the Library figures exemplifying community charges and non-domestic rates had the Government's proposals for the reform of local finance been fully in place in 1987-88.

I must repeat the warning given by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) when publishing equivalent figures for 1986-87 on 1 April c. 547. These figures are not a prediction of community charges in 1990. They are based entirely on expenditure returns made by local authorities at the start of this financial year. They make no allowance for the distortion of those figures by technical accounting arrangements nor for the extent to which rates this year are being funded from balances or special funds and vice versa. They are based on 1987-88 grant levels and needs assessments, although final decisions have yet to be taken on the size and operation of the new grant arrangements and on the transition to the new system. Nor do the figures take account of the changes in local authority responsibilities foreshadowed in the manifesto, particularly the arrangements for inner London boroughs to opt out of ILEA, proposed changes to housing finance, or the impact of the extended use of competitive tendering in the more efficient provision of local services. But, above all, these figures make no allowance for changes in the level of a local authority's expenditure between now and 1990. However, they clearly illustrate the importance of high spending authorities starting now to identify economies and of those who live in those authorities insisting that they do so.

The figures for changes in non-domestic rate poundages do not take account of the amendments for the five-year transitional period which I have already announced.

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the impact of the proposed community charge in the Leeds, West constituency, Surrey, South-West constituency and Richmond (Yorks) constituency.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) earlier today.

Mrs. Mahon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will produce exact figures to show what each adult in Halifax will pay with the introduction of the poll tax.

Mr. Howard: No. Since the new system will not come into effect until 1990, it is not possible to say what the level of the community charge in Halifax will be when it is introduced. However, I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) earlier today.

Mrs. Mahon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will pay a visit to Halifax to discuss the effect of the introduction of the poll tax.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend and I have no plans to do so. But were I to do so, I would take the opportunity of pointing out to the voters of Calderdale that 31 per cent. of their illustrative community charge (of £259) arises directly from the overspending of the local authorities in their area. I would also urge on them the need to insist now on more economical and efficient local services.

Water Rates

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing (a) the percentage increase in domestic water rates for each year since 1979-80 for each English regional water authority and the overall average, (b) the cumulative percentage increase since 1979-80 for each English water authority and the overall average and (c) the average domestic water rates bill per household for each year since 1979 for each English regional water authority and the overall average.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is shown in the table. The average household bills are taken from charges returns made annually to DOE.

Water authorities: Average household bills

Water authority	1979-80 £. p.	1980-81 £. p.	Per cent.	1981-82 £. p.	Per cent.	1982-83 £. p.	Per cent.	1983-84 £. p.	Per cent.	1984-85 £. p.	Per cent.	1985-86 £. p.	Per cent.	1986-87 £. p.	Per cent.	1987-88 £. p.	Per cent.	Cumulative over 1979-80 Per cent.
Combined all services																		
North West	37.90	46.80	23.5	54.69	16.9	59.86	9.7	63.16	5.5	68.25	8.1	77.57	13.7	85.19	9.8	91.12	7.0	140.4
Northumbrian	33.94	41.95	23.6	49.19	17.3	56.86	16.0	64.52	13.5	75.22	16.6	80.38	6.9	84.34	4.9	88.63	5.1	161.1
Severn Trent	40.51	48.99	20.9	56.78	15.9	62.44	7.4	64.63	3.5	67.88	5.0	76.16	12.2	83.55	9.7	89.53	7.2	121.0
Yorkshire	39.36	49.04	24.6	57.21	16.7	65.30	14.1	68.78	5.3	72.64	5.6	82.30	13.3	90.96	10.5	97.72	7.4	148.3
Anglian	48.83	63.01	29.0	75.08	19.2	82.66	11.9	87.80	6.2	93.96	7.0	105.98	12.8	116.69	10.1	124.03	6.3	154.0
Thames	38.62	47.82	23.8	54.47	13.9	60.77	13.5	66.74	9.8	73.41	7.6	80.75	10.0	83.09	2.9	87.74	5.6	127.2
Southern	43.80	56.60	29.2	67.00	18.4	74.40	11.0	79.20	6.5	83.84	5.9	93.76	11.8	102.78	9.6	109.10	6.1	149.1
Wessex	57.22	65.44	14.4	72.87	11.4	78.49	7.5	81.56	3.9	85.59	4.9	95.35	11.4	107.09	12.3	114.45	6.9	100.0
South West	54.57	66.72	22.3	75.22	12.7	81.24	8.6	87.96	8.3	93.48	6.3	104.59	11.9	110.90	6.0	116.08	4.7	112.7
English water authorities	41.47	51.37	23.9	59.47	15.8	66.01	11.0	70.92	7.4	75.73	6.8	84.56	11.7	91.25	7.9	97.18	6.5	134.3

Rents

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the average level (a) of local authority rents and (b) of fair rents registered for unfurnished lettings in England in each of the years from 1979 to 1987, indicating the percentage

increase in each on an annual and cumulative basis, showing also the movement of the retail price index over that same period.

Mr. Ridley: The figures on local authority rents, the average rents registered by rent officers and the movements in the retail prices index are as follows:

Average weekly rents ¹ England					Retail prices index United Kingdom—April		
Local authority (unrebated) April		Fair rents unfurnished tenancies ²		£	Percentage increase		
£	Percentage increase	2nd half year	£		Over year	Since 1979	
1979	6.41	—	—	39.55	—	—	—
1980	7.70	20	20	31.40	22	22	22
1981	11.42	48	78	13.00	12	36	36
1982	13.48	18	110	14.25	9	49	49
1983	13.97	4	118	15.60	4	55	55
1984	14.66	5	129	16.80	5	63	63
1985	15.54	6	142	18.05	7	75	75
1986	16.36	5	155	19.95	3	80	80
1987	*17.22	5	169	—	4	87	87

¹ Service charges, if any, are included in fair rents, but not in local authority rents.

² Registered rents for private regulated tenancies only.

- ³ England and Wales.
⁴ Provisional estimate.
⁵ Not available.

The mix of properties for which rents are registered varies from year to year for a number of reasons: for example, extension of decontrol in 1981; the reduction from three to two years in the minimum period for re-registration which led to re-registrations in 1983 of rents previously registered in 1980 and 1981. Therefore, comparisons of averages for consecutive years do not properly reflect rent movements. Better estimates of rent movements are derived from previous and new registered rents for tenancies where there has been no material change in terms or in the physical condition. For properties with rents fixed in the second halves of 1979, 1982, 1984 and 1986, the estimated increases are:

	per cent. increase in period	annualised per cent. increase
1979 to 1982	47	14
1982 to 1984	18	9
1984 to 1986	17	8

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact on local authority rents in Leeds for the current financial year of proposals to prevent rate contribution to the local authority's housing revenue account.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no proposals to end rate fund contributions to housing revenue accounts in the current financial year.

Homelessness

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress being made by the University of Birmingham's centre for urban and regional studies on the research work on homelessness commissioned in February 1987 by his Department.

Mr. Ridley: The project is proceeding to timetable and we expect to receive the results by the end of March 1988.

Vacant Dwellings

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the percentage of empty dwellings in (a) private sector, (b) public sector, (c) those owned and controlled by Her Majesty's Government and (d) housing associations; and if he will publish from the local authorities housing investment returns for 1 April 1987 the number and percentage of vacant dwellings in the local authority housing associations, other public sectors and the private sector giving totals for each.

Mr. Ridley: Local authorities' 1987 housing investment programme returns are not yet available.

The latest estimates of vacant housing in England, based on the authorities' 1986 HIP returns, are as follows:

*Vacant dwellings as a percentage of total stock at
1 April 1986—England*

	per cent.
Local authorities	2.5
Housing associations	3.2
Other public sector	6.6
Private sector	4.1
All sectors	3.7

The "other public sector" figures include local authorities' overspill estates, in addition to housing owned by new towns, county councils (for example police houses), Government Departments, nationalised industries and other public agencies. Many of them are vacant because of operational requirements, notably those owned by MOD and others have been acquired for demolition, for example by Department of Transport. The Government are encouraging the sale of housing which is not required, and many of those that are vacant are in the process of disposal.

Housing associations' acquisition of dwellings for rehabilitation inflate the numbers which are vacant.

Vacant dwellings in the private sector include those which are in severe disrepair, those undergoing renovation or awaiting demolition, those which are empty while being sold or between lettings, and those whose owners do not wish to occupy or sell them but are deterred from letting by the Rent Act.

Urban Programme

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the urban programme 1987-88 for Leeds will be approved.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is currently considering Leeds inner area programme in the light of further information about individual projects received on 11 June.

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the total urban programme for the financial years 1978-79 to 1987-88, estimated; and if he will list the outturn urban programme grants paid to each partnership, programme and designated authority and the estimated figure for 1987-88, showing also for each authority the level of funding in each year on (a) housing subsidy receivable and (b) block grants expressed in constant 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer this question shortly.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each of the Government Departments currently in discussion with the London residuary body regarding grants still outstanding in respect of Greater London council activities prior to abolition.

Mr. Chope: My Department is in discussion with the London residuary body about the payment of outstanding Government grants for which provision has been made in the GLC's 1985-86 closing accounts. I understand from LRB that it is also in discussion with the Home Office, the

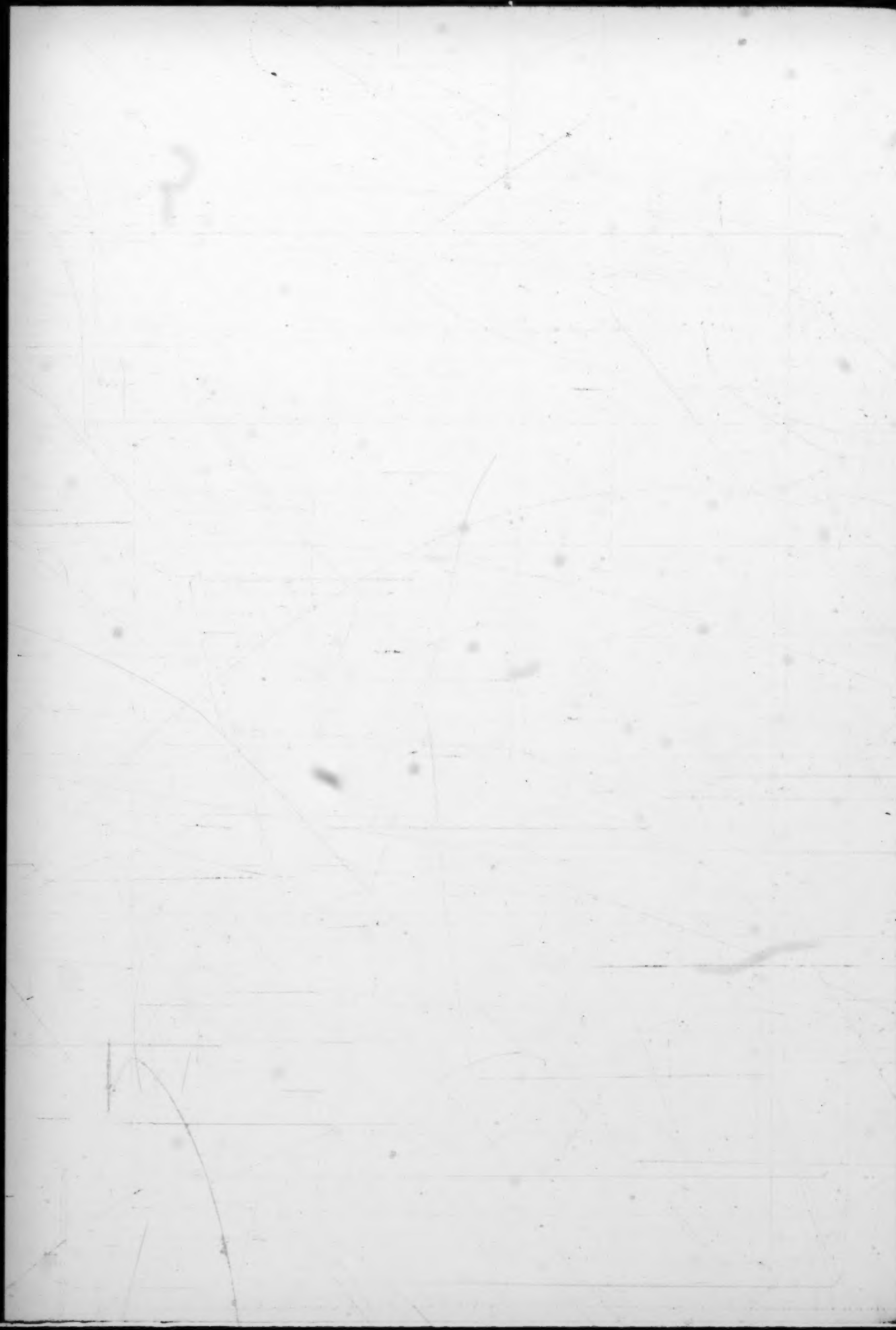
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Manpower Services Commission about various such grants.

Housing Subsidy

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing subsidy paid to each

London borough, metropolitan district and non-metropolitan district in each of the years from 1978-79 and 1987-88, estimated, expressed in constant 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer this question shortly.



Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 30 June 1987

DEFENCE

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total cost at current prices (a) of the Tornado aircraft fleet and (b) of spares in stock and ordered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: For the cost of the Tornado programme, I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip, Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) on 20 February last, at column 875. The value of spares in stock and currently on order is estimated at £636 million at current economic conditions.

United States Forces (United Kingdom Bases)

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many bases in the United Kingdom are currently in use either in part or in whole by United States forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are currently 66 military bases and facilities in the United Kingdom made available for use by US forces. In addition, there are two NATO armament depots which provide a service for US forces.

Jaguar and Tornado Aircraft (Crashes)

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) Jaguar and (b) Tornado aircraft have crashed during flight operations since 1979; and what is the total cost in (i) lost aircraft, (ii) recovery operations, (iii) damage repairs and (iv) number of lives lost and pilots forced to discontinue flying because of severe injury.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1979, 37 Royal Air Force Jaguars and 12 Tornados have suffered irreparable damage in crashes, as a result of which 18 aircrew died and two others sustained injuries which prevented them from undertaking further flying duties. The cost of the aircraft lost, in 1987 prices, is £430 million. It would not be possible to quantify associated recovery work without disproportionate cost and effort.

Trident Missiles

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the increase in destructive power over Polaris represented by the deployment of Trident nuclear missiles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 6-11 of the essay entitled "The Minimum Deterrent" to be found on pages 39 to 42 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987".

Royal Dockyards

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Defence when employees in the royal dockyards will be informed of the financial value of their personal buyout pension bond; and what are the reasons for the delay in providing this information following the introduction of commercial management on 6 April.

Mr. Sainsbury: Changes in the method of revaluation associated with personal buyout bonds have been announced by the Treasury since the royal dockyards were contractorised on 6 April 1987. Such transfers are, as a result, more widely available and there has been a considerable increase in demand for personal estimates. I am well aware of the concern of dockyard employees and plans are being made to deal with the new situation. I shall be writing to my hon. Friend shortly.

AOR2

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the procurement timetable for the AOR2 vessel.

Mr. Sainsbury: Swan Hunter Shipbuilders has been given a preferential opportunity to tender for the second AOR, to the Harland and Wolff design. Its tender was received on 18 June and this is now being evaluated. We hope to be able to negotiate a contract based on the terms and conditions outlined by my right hon. Friend on 24 April 1986, at column 434, so that work can commence on the ship as soon as possible after negotiations are completed.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Peter Wright

Mr. Cryer asked the Attorney-General what is the total cost, to the most recent practicable date, of legal representations in Australia and elsewhere in attempting to suppress publication of Mr. Peter Wright's book on M15.

The Attorney-General: The total amount of costs expended to date in the proceedings to restrain the publication of Mr. Peter Wright's manuscript is about £292,000.

WALES

Green Pound

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to meet representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales and the National Farmers Union in Wales to discuss the devaluation of the green pound; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall be meeting both unions next month, but I am well aware of the farming unions' views on the need for a substantial devaluation of the green pound in the current CAP price fixing negotiations.

TRANSPORT

Scotrail (Dundee Depot)

Mr. McAllion asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the management of Scotrail to discuss the future of its Dundee depot; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. It would be inappropriate for Ministers to intervene in what is a management matter for the board.

Airedale Trunk Road

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of providing quarry materials by rail for the construction of the Airedale trunk road and the current cost using road-borne traffic; how many road transport contractors are involved; and how many vehicle inspections have been carried out in 1987 to the most recent practicable date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The cost of providing materials by rail is not available for the two sections of the Airedale route under construction. Following investigation, the Department was satisfied that the cost of delivering bulk materials by rail was considerably greater than by road.

The estimated cost of imported bulk fill by road for the first section of the route is £4.0 million; for the second section the estimated cost is £1.0 million. To date, 70 haulage subcontractors have been employed on the first section and 53 on the second.

Inspections of loaded vehicles are not related to hauliers working on particular road schemes. The Department's traffic examiners and vehicle examiners carry out programmes of roadside checks on weights and other aspects and also fleet inspections to check mechanical conditions of vehicles.

Settle-Carlisle Railway

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet reached a decision on the retention of the Settle-Carlisle railway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I appreciate the concern caused by continuing uncertainty over this line's future. It is, however, the most complex closure case for many years and there are many issues involved. I am working to resolve them.

Railway Sidings

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many grants for the installation of railway sidings under section 8 of the Transport Act 1974 have been made in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 to the most recent practicable date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information requested is as follows:

Year	Number of grants
1979	17
1980	20

Year	Number of grants
1981	7
1982	14
1983	17
1984	18
1985	21
1986	4
1987	2

¹ To date.

These figures are the totals for Great Britain, and include grants made by the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales.

British Rail (Vandalism)

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated cost of vandalism on British Rail; whether grant aid to remedy the damage is available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No estimate of the cost of vandalism on British Rail is available. There is no specific grant-aid to remedy damage caused by vandalism, but all the costs of operating the passenger railway, including those associated with vandalism and policing, are at present taken into account in determining the amount of PSO grant paid to BR. From next year, when the InterCity services cease to be eligible for grant, the cost of vandalism on those services will have to be met from fares.

Lighthouse-tender Ships

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to receive the consultative report on the operation of the United Kingdom's lighthouse-tender ships; and whether he will make copies available in the Library.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement shortly. Copies of the report, when it is published, will be placed in the Library.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received the consultants' report on surface access to Heathrow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The report of the Heathrow surface access study on travel between Heathrow airport and central London, which the Government commissioned in March 1986, is being published today by the consultants Howard Humphreys and Partners, who undertook the study in association with the MVA consultancy and Kennedy Henderson Ltd. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library and sent to those most closely involved. Further copies are available direct from the consultants.

The consultants were asked to examine the implications of growth at the airport over the next 20 years, including the possibility of further terminal development on the Perry Oaks site. There are no plans for such a development, but it would have been wrong to conduct a long-term review of this kind without examining how the transport options considered could meet the increased

passenger demand which would be created by any further development of this kind within the timescale dealt with by the study.

The report confirms the general experience that roads in the Heathrow to London corridor are already heavily loaded and traffic is continuing to grow. If nothing is done, delays will get worse. While Heathrow traffic is only a small proportion of all traffic using these roads, the report proposes various ways of assisting the flow of traffic on the M4 and A4 to make journey times to Heathrow shorter and more predictable. Three of the schemes, to the west of Chiswick, are relatively straightforward; these have already been incorporated into the Department's programme of projects for the A4-M4 corridor. The report also identifies possibilities for more far-reaching schemes to the east of Chiswick.

The study revealed that rail and road options were complementary rather than competing, and the report identifies a large number of possible rail developments involving both British Rail and improved Underground services. These have been evaluated on a financial basis using a computer model developed specially for the study. The report finds that some of these rail schemes should be commercially viable.

In accordance with their remit to look beyond the end of the century, the consultants have considered the scope for more radical solutions. One possibility considered is the use of new technology to provide a dedicated link connecting the terminals at the airport directly with central London. A further possibility involves a tolled tunnel from Boston Manor on the M4 to the Shepherds Bush area. In view of the promising options that have been identified for cheaper and more conventional solutions, both road and rail, I do not propose to have these ideas taken forward as public sector projects for the time being.

The Government will need to reflect carefully on the findings of this major study. I am therefore inviting comments on the report's conclusions from the main transport operators (British Airways, British Rail, Civil Aviation Authority, Heathrow airport, and London Underground), the relevant local authorities, and other interested parties. The Government will also be considering how the private sector might be involved in the development and financing of the schemes discussed in the report; no decisions have yet been taken on the provision of public sector finance.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Political Refugees (China)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many citizens from China are claiming political refugee status in the United Kingdom at the latest date.

Mr. Renton: As at 26 June there were three Chinese nationals whose initial application for refugee status was under consideration.

Economic League

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made with inquiries into the matters raised in the "World in Action"

television programme broadcast on 16 February concerning the Economic League and possible breaches of the law, including section 2 of the Official Secrets Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received from the chief constable of the North Yorkshire police a report of an investigation carried out by a senior officer of his force into claims that information, in particular about criminal records, was passed to the Economic League by the police. Detailed examinations of police national computer transactions made by the force produced no indication that the PNC had been used to obtain criminal record information for the league. Further inquiries and interviews produced no evidence to support the implication that other police information had been passed to the league.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will increase the public expenditure allocations to the Department of Health and Social Security in order to facilitate the full implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: Priorities within the DHSS programme will be discussed over the next few months as part of the annual review of public expenditure.

Disincorporation

Mr. Sackville asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will be considering changes in the law to remove obstacles to disincorporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There may be circumstances in which those involved in running a company consider that it would be commercially preferable for the business to be run in unincorporated form. The Government have received representations that there are a number of fiscal and other legal deterrents to moving from corporate to unincorporated status. As indicated in the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" (Cmnd. 9794) the Government have been considering ways of removing these deterrents. The Inland Revenue and the Department of Trade and Industry will this week be publishing a consultative document seeking views on possible changes to company and taxation law relating to disincorporation. A copy of the document will be placed in the Library of the House and the closing date for comments will be 31 October 1987.

Pensions

68. Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Government now intend to reintroduce measures to enable members of occupational pension schemes to make additional voluntary contributions to a separate pension plan.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It remains our intention to reintroduce all the proposals dropped from this year's Finance Act as soon as possible.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Copyright

Mr. Fraser asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he plans to introduce legislation to modernise the law of copyright.

Mr. Butcher: As announced in the Queen's Speech, a Bill will be introduced to reform the law of copyright.

Leather (Imports)

Mr. Fry asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give figures for the levels of Japanese exports of leather to the United Kingdom for the last five years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom imports of leather from Japan

	£000
1986	4,868
1985	3,331
1984	2,439
1983	1,435
1982	1,230

Notes:

1. Leather defined as Standard International Trade Classification Division 61 less Item 613.0

2. 1986 figure provisional

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics

Mr. Fry asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give figures for the levels of finished leather garment imports from Turkey for each of the last five years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom imports of leather garments from Turkey

	£000
1986	3,606
1985	4,032
1984	2,957
1983	726
1982	541

Notes:

1. Leather Garments defined as United Kingdom Tariff heading 4203.100

2. 1986 figure provisional

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics

Director General of Fair Trading (Report)

Mr. Chapman asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to publish the report by the Director General of Fair Trading for 1986.

Mr. Maude: The 13th annual report by the Director General of Fair Trading has been published today. It covers the period 1 January 1986 to 31 December 1986. Copies of the report have been laid before Parliament.

Yorkshire Woollen Textile Industry

Mr. Cryer asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the number of employees in the Yorkshire woollen textile industry for 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 to the most recent practicable date.

Mr. Atkins: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Furniture and Toys (Safety Regulations)

Mr. Cryer asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation to ensure that fire safety regulations for furniture sold for use in the home are stringently applied; if he is satisfied that there are adequate safeguards to ensure that toys are not inflammable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Cryer asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the deficit in trade in manufactured goods between the United Kingdom and the Common Market in 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 to the most recent practicable date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table:

*United Kingdom Balance of Trade in Manufactures¹
with the European Community²*

*BOP Basis, £ billion
Not Seasonally Adjusted*

Year	
1984	-8.1
1985	-8.7
1986	-10.1
1987 Q1	-2.4

¹ Standard International Trade Classification Sections 5 to 8.

² Present Membership throughout.

Source: Department of Trade and Industry.

Origin Marking

Mr. Cryer asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation to ensure that goods offered for retail sale are marked with the country of origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I have no plans to do so. The European Court of Justice, in its 1985 judgment against the former Trade Descriptions (Origin Marking) (Miscellaneous Goods) Order 1981, has already made it clear that such a requirement would be in breach of Article 30 of the treaty of Rome. However, it is and will remain a criminal offence to mislead consumers about the origin of goods.

Afghanistan (Arms Exports)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has had from Shorts of Belfast about the export of arms to Afghanistan.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is not the practice to comment on individual defence equipment export matters.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Korea

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's present relations with the Republic of Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have been following events in the Republic of Korea closely and are encouraged by reports of the latest developments. Our bilateral relations continue to be good.

Nigeria

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current relations with Nigeria.

Mrs. Chalker: We enjoy close and cordial relations with Nigeria, a fellow Commonwealth member.

British National (Overseas)

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the diplomatic exercise to explain the new status of British National (Overseas) and the passport that goes with it.

Mr. Eggar: Over a period of nine months we have conducted an intensive diplomatic campaign to explain the background to the 1986 Order in Council and the creation through it of the status of British National (Overseas). We have drawn attention to the fact that British passports in that status will be available from 1 July 1987, and have handed over specimen copies explaining the various endorsements which will help make the passport an effective travel document both before and after 1997. We have also made it clear that the arrangements we are introducing are in the full knowledge and understanding of the Chinese Government.

The response we have received to these explanations has been overwhelmingly positive. No foreign or Commonwealth Government have said that they would not accept for entry to their territory travellers holding BN(O) passports. Many have let it be known publicly in Hong Kong that the passports are acceptable. There is therefore every reason to believe that holders of BN(O) passports will be able to travel as widely and freely as they were previously when using British dependent territories citizen passports. The Government will continue to monitor reactions carefully, and will make every effort to ensure that the arrangements which come into force on 1 July work smoothly.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present, four meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for July. The incoming Danish presidency has indicated that it may call meetings of the Council earlier than those scheduled.

The Economic and Finance Council is due to meet on 13 July. It is expected to consider the second quarterly review of the economic situation in the Community. The agenda may also include the effects on Spain and Portugal of the Council's decision to delay reimbursement to member states of losses incurred on the disposal of butter stocks; the Commission's proposals on the future financing of the Community; and the Economic Policy Committee's report on the Commission's 5-year financial forecast.

The Agriculture Council is due to meet on 13-14 July to continue if necessary its discussion on the 1987 price fixing proposals.

The Foreign Affairs Council meets on 20-21 July. Discussions will cover the Commission's proposal for a regime to regulate the levels of radioactivity in food following a nuclear accident and developments in both EC Japan and EC US relations.

The Budget Council is due to discuss the 1988 Preliminary Draft Budget at its meeting scheduled for 23 July.

Cash Limits

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any changes have occurred in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office cash limits for 1987-88.

Mr. Eggar: The cash limit for Class II, Vote I, overseas Representation, will be decreased by £544,000 from £424,360,000 to £423,816,000 to take account of a reduced requirement for the installation costs of the FOLIOS computer project attributed to this Vote.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Shorts (Surface-to-air Missiles)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds he has given to Shorts of Belfast in relation to the development of surface-to-air missiles.

Mr. Viggers [pursuant to his reply, 29 June 1987 c. 27]: The Secretary of State has given no funds to Shorts of Belfast for the development of surface-to-air missiles, but the missiles systems division of the company is in receipt of standard capital grants for the purchase of machinery and equipment.

Vehicle Excise Duty (Fines)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland in the last three years for which figures are available have been imprisoned for not paying a fine imposed by a court for failure to display a Road Fund Licence; and what information he has as to how many such fines are outstanding at present.

Mr. Stanley [pursuant to his reply, 29 June 1987, col. 28]: In 1985 the last year, for which figures are available, 1,091 people were imprisoned in Northern Ireland in default of payment of fines. However, information about the number of persons imprisoned specifically for not paying a fine for failing to display a road fund licence is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

At 26 June 1987 the number of fines imposed at magistrates' courts for this offence and which remained unpaid totalled 1,087.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Meals

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had on the case for nutritional guidelines for school meals.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has had no such discussions. Local education authorities have access to a wide range of expert professional advice on this matter.

Geological Surveying

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he received a copy of Sir Clifford Butler's report on the future of geological surveying; and whether he will arrange for its immediate publication.

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he proposes to publish the joint Natural Environment Research Council—Advisory Body for Research Councils study group report into geological surveying.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend received a copy of Sir Clifford Butler's report on 22 June, with preliminary comments from the chairman of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council. My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement on publication shortly.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Inspectors

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of wages inspectors in post for 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 to the most recent practicable date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The numbers of wages inspectors in post were as follows:

	Number
1979	158
1980	155
1981	125
1982	116
1983	116
1984	115
1985	118
1986	92
1987	75

¹ June

The Wages Inspectorate is being reduced to 71 inspectors. This is considered to be adequate in view of the simplified wages council system introduced by the Government in 1986.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Employment in how many claims made in the London borough of Camden entitlement to unemployment benefit has been disqualified on the grounds of voluntary unemployment or dismissal for misconduct, or both, since the new rules came into operation in October 1986; and in how many cases the disqualification was for the maximum period of 13 weeks.

Mr. Lee: Information is not readily available about claims made in individual local authority areas, and this could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

THE ARTS

South Bank Board (Report)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Minister for the Arts when he expects to lay before Parliament a copy of the South Bank Board's report to the Arts Council for the year ended 31 March, as required by section 47 of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Luce: I congratulate the South Bank Board on the success of its first year, and welcome the 1986-87 report: "Now we are one", a copy of which has been laid before Parliament today; the audited accounts for 1986-87 will be presented to Parliament later this year when they are available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cereals

Mr. Lord asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria will be applied to decide eligibility for the small cereals producer aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: In the United Kingdom eligibility for the small cereals producer aid intended to offset the effect of the cereals co-responsibility levy, will be restricted to those cereals producers with not more than 100 hectares of crops and grass, excluding rough grazing, who can supply evidence that during the 1986-87 cereals marketing year they have had the cereals co-responsibility levy deducted on their grain. The aid will be paid at a maximum rate of £3.37 per tonne on a minimum claim of 3 tonnes and up to a maximum of 25 tonnes (£84.33). The rate of aid will be reduced if the total amount of aid claimed by producers exceeds the 5.35 million ECU (£3.354 million) allocated to the United Kingdom for this purpose.

Application forms are being despatched in England and Wales to those cereal producers believed to meet the criteria. Producers who believe they are eligible and do not receive an application form should apply to their local divisional office for a form. Separate arrangements for distributing application forms have been made in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Completed application forms must be returned to divisional offices by 31 July 1987. Payments will be made by 31 December 1987.

Cash Limits

Mr. David Martin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is proposed to change the cash limit on any departmental vote for which he has responsibility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limits on votes for which I and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland are responsible will be increased in order to make provision for the purchase of milk quota in Great Britain for issue to Northern Ireland producers as announced to the House on 31 March 1987 at column 445.

The cash limit for Class IV Vote 4 (other Agricultural and Food Services and Support for the Fishing Industry) will be increased by £875,000 from £141,801,000 to £142,676,000 and that for Class XVI Vote 2 (Agricultural

Services and Fisheries, Scotland) by £127,000 from £69,832,000 to £69,959,000. These increases will be contained within planned provision for programmes and will not involve a call on the reserve.

ENVIRONMENT

Tyneside Urban Development Corporation

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members of the Tyneside Urban Development Corporation; and if he will state the annual remuneration paid to each member.

Mr. Trippier: The members of the Tyne and Wear development corporation are Mr. Paul Nicholson (Chairman), Mr. John Ward (Deputy Chairman), Mr. Graeme Anderson, Mr. John Barnsley, Councillor John Donnelly, Mr. John Hall, Dr. Ralph Iley, Mr. Joe Mills, Councillor Bert Moore and Councillor Septimus Robinson.

All posts are part-time. The chairman is paid £13,610 a year on the basis of a time commitment of one and half days per week. The deputy chairman is paid £6,158 a year on the basis for a time commitment of 1 day per week. Members are paid at a flat rate of £3,610 a year.

Defective Houses

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will designate Wimpey No-Fire houses under the Housing Act 1985 to permit the assistance of owner-occupiers who purchased such defective houses from local authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase the housing investment programme allocation to Walsall to assist the local authority to deal with defective housing such as Wimpey No-Fire, Smith, Cornish and Reema.

Mr. Waldegrave: Local authorities were notified last December of their HIP allocations for 1987-88. Although authorities were invited to bid for a share of £14 million extra HIP resources put aside for those experiencing particular difficulties with obligations under the housing defects legislation, Walsall decided not to submit an application.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent visit to Liverpool of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier).

Mr. Trippier: I visited Liverpool on 22 June 1987 to see the work of the Merseyside Development Corporation. I met the chairman, chief executive and senior officials of the development corporation, toured a number of formerly derelict dockland sites and saw for myself what is being achieved by the corporation in partnership with the private sector, in revitalising large sectors of Liverpool's Docklands.

Urban Programme

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the total urban programme for the financial years 1978-79 to 1987-88 (estimated); and if he will list the outturn urban programme grants paid to each partnership, programme and designated authority and the estimated figure for 1987-88, showing also for each authority the level of funding in each year on (a) housing subsidy receivable and (b) block grant expressed in constant 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Ridley [pursuant to his reply, 29 June 1987, c. 48]: I have placed in the Library a copy of the information on the detailed breakdown of the total urban programme for the financial years 1978-79 to 1987-88 and information on block grant to those authorities. Information on the level of funding on housing subsidy receivable is being placed in the Library pursuant to my reply of 29 June 1987, at column 49. I shall write to the hon. Member with the information requested on urban programme grants.

Housing Subsidy

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the housing subsidy paid to each London borough, metropolitan district and non-metropolitan district in each of the years from 1978-79 to 1987-88 (estimated) expressed in constant 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Ridley [pursuant to his reply, 29 June 1987, c. 49]: I am placing in the Library the information requested for the years 1981-82 to 1987-88 inclusive. Information for the years before 1981-82, when the present housing subsidy system came into operation, cannot be provided except at undue cost.

PRIME MINISTER

Trident (Report)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister for what reason information in the report by Ministry of Defence civil servants, on the costs of Trident, prepared on the instructions of Sir Robert Armstrong, designed for an incoming Labour Government was given to *The Independent* newspaper in the first week of June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

None of the material prepared for any incoming Government has been made public. *The Independent* newspaper approached the Ministry of Defence in early June with questions about Trident. It was given only information already publicly available.

NHS (Patients' Choice)

Mr. Ray Powell asked the Prime Minister what plans Her Majesty's Government have to increase opportunities for patients to choose the date, venue and doctor for their treatment within the National Health Service.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

The Government's aim is to make sure that all patients receive the treatment that they need within a reasonable time. That is why we have launched a waiting list initiative backed up by a special fund of £50 million which we expect to bring about the treatment of 200,000 extra patients from the waiting list over two years.

There are no plans to change the present system where a general practitioner may refer his patients to the consultant he considers most appropriate for their treatment. In doing so a general practitioner can take account of probable waiting time and location. Acceptance of the patient and date of admission is then a matter for the consultant's clinical judgment, taking into account the patient's availability for treatment.

Norwich

Q14. Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to visit Norwich.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply. My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Welsh Office

Q16. Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received about Her Majesty's Government's proposals for the administration of the Welsh Office.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has received three such letters, including one from the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) and one jointly from the hon. Members for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas), for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones).

Shettleston

Q25. Mr. David Marshall asked the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Shettleston constituency.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is in Brussels for a meeting of the European Council.

Mr. Abdul Haq

53. Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what discussions she had with Mr. Abdul Haq during his visit to number 10 Downing street on 11 March 1986, about the acquisition of Blowpipe missiles by persons or organisations opposed to the Kabul regime; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to comment on matters of this kind.

Nuclear Accidents

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Prime Minister what stage has now been reached in preparing a contingency plan to deal with the effects of any future nuclear accident overseas.

The Prime Minister: The main framework of the new contingency plan, to cater specifically for the consequences

for this country of nuclear accidents outside the United Kingdom, is complete. Departments and organisations involved in implementing the plan are now preparing their own, complementary, individual contingency plans. Discussion of certain aspects with elected member representatives of the local authority associations will take place in the near future.

The main features of the new plan are:—

Central Government Arrangements

1. These are designed to carry out the following tasks:

- (a) Establish the hazard likely to be faced by this country;
- (b) Determine the measures required to protect and/or reassure the public;
- (c) Issue whatever specific directions or general information may be required;
- (d) Keep Parliament properly informed.

2. These tasks will be carried out under the auspices of the Department of the Environment (the lead Department) where a co-ordination centre will be established. Officials of Departments and organisations directly concerned will work in the co-ordination centre where assessments, based on monitoring information, will be co-ordinated, recommendations will be made on action to be taken and briefing material will be prepared for Parliament, Ministers and the public. Those Departments (including territorial departments), with statutory responsibilities, for example for health, agriculture, control of contaminated cargoes and so on, will thus be enabled to discharge them in the context of a co-ordinated response to the effects of an accident.

3. The Secretary of State for the Environment will answer in Parliament on all aspects of Government arrangements except those which are the specific departmental responsibility of other Ministers. Should a need arise the lead Department would seek support from the appropriate Cabinet committee, under arrangements made by the Cabinet Office.

Monitoring and Data Assessment

4. The whole country is to be covered by a network of monitoring stations based on existing facilities. The necessary equipment is already in place in some of these stations and will be installed in the others. Arrangements will be made to supplement the information obtained from these stations by deploying portable detectors, mobile sampling equipment and possibly aerial monitoring devices, as well as using information available from those hospitals, universities, local authorities and other organisations with monitoring facilities.

5. Data from all monitoring sources will be stored on a central data base facility (CDF) and be available to Departments and organisations responsible for making assessments. Commercial electronic mail (for example, BT Gold) telephone, telex and facsimile systems will be used to transmit monitoring information to the CDF. Assessments and advice based on them will be disseminated on appropriate channels, which will include the media, Viewdata systems (for example, CEEFAX and ORACLE) and departmental channels (for example, MAFF, DHSS, FCO and territorial Departments) for specific purposes, for example to permit Ministers to carry out their statutory responsibilities. Assessments and the advice based on them will also be stored on the CDF and interested organisations will be given access to them.

Public Information

6. During the period immediately following the Chernobyl accident extensive use was made by the public of departmental hot lines in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff. These facilities will be continued. In addition, information and advice will be routed to the public via local authorities, health authorities and the regional structure of the relevant central Government Departments. Further discussions will be held with local authority associations and others about practical aspects of implementing this part of the plan.

Public Protection

7. The considered conclusions of the expert authorities concerned, after a careful analysis of the Chernobyl experience and other relevant factors, is that an accident overseas, even to an installation on the French or Belgian coasts, would be most unlikely to produce effects in this country that would justify making specific contingency arrangements for evacuation, shelter or distribution of potassium iodate tablets. Arrangements will, however, be made to cover the following:

- (a) Treatment of those returning from affected areas overseas for effects of exposure to radiation — by Health Departments;
- (b) Possible contamination of food and water — by DOE, MAFF, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland Offices;
- (c) Advice to United Kingdom citizens abroad or intending to travel — by FCO, DTI, D.Transport, MOD, DHSS, (together with ABTA and the media) as appropriate;
- (d) The import-export of contaminated goods — by DTI, DHSS, MAFF and territorial departments, closely co-ordinated with arrangements being made under EC auspices.

Action will be co-ordinated as necessary under lead Department auspices.

Relationship with Plans for an Accident inside the United Kingdom

8. Existing plans to cope with a nuclear accident inside the United Kingdom, relating to individual nuclear installations, which will remain the responsibility of the Secretaries of State for Energy, Scotland, Defence or Transport as appropriate, have mostly been publicised in some detail in the areas to which they apply and in more general terms in the Health and Safety Executive publication "Emergency Plans for Civil Nuclear Installations". Any accident in this country would almost certainly require implementation of parts of this plan for example, activation of the monitoring network. There will therefore be close correlation between this plan and existing plans, which are currently under review.

Review Arrangements

9. The new plan will be kept under regular review. Arrangements will be made for appropriate exercises to practise the plan and, where necessary, improve it.

Scottish Devolution

Q 65. **Dr. A. Godman** asked the Prime Minister if she will now take steps to hold a referendum in Scotland on the issue of devolution in Scotland.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.
The Government have no plans to do so.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Health Authorities (Charges)

13. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice he has given to health authorities about levying charges for treating patients from other health authorities.

18. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice he is offering to health authorities on charging other health authorities for services provided.

Mr. Newton: The Department is to discuss draft guidance on this issue with regional health authority treasurers at one of their regular meetings later this week. This will confirm the current legal position; that health authorities may enter into a charging arrangement by mutual consent but that an individual authority may neither impose a charge unilaterally nor refuse to treat a patient if no payment is made.

Leukaemia

14. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the incidence of leukaemia around nuclear power stations.

Mr. Newton: The Department has established the independent expert Committee on the Medical Aspect of Radiation in the Environment to advise the Government on such matters. COMARE has been asked to advise on

the position in relation to Scottish nuclear sites and the Aldermaston Burghfield area. More recently it has been asked to advise on the recent Office of Population Censuses and Surveys report on cancer incidence and mortality in the vicinity of nuclear installations in England and Wales. We await the Committee's advice.

COMARE was set up in response to one of the recommendations in Sir Douglas Black's report on Sellafeld. Action has been taken also to implement the other recommendations in that report. A small area statistics unit is being set up under Professor Geoffrey Rose at the London School of Hygiene, to study statistics on the distribution of disease amongst small areas and the interpretation of such statistics, and to study reports of unusual clusters of disease in the neighbourhood of industrial installations. The epidemiological studies recommended in Cumbria are well on their way towards completion.

Benefits

15. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children are now living in households dependent on social security benefits.

Mr. Scott: Around 2.24 million children were living in families receiving supplementary benefit in February 1987, the date of the latest available statistics. The reformed social security structure to be implemented next April will target help more specifically on low income families with children through the new family credit and the family premium in income support.

65. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action will be taken to measure the extent to which claimants do not receive benefits to which they are entitled, following the recently published report on the subject by the National Audit Office.

Mr. Portillo: The Department's system of measurement covers underpayments and overpayments of benefit. The recent National Audit Office report drew attention to undetected errors. In the light of the report, officials are urgently considering ways in which detection, recording, and correction of wrong payments can be improved.

Hospital Closures

17. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospitals have closed in the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not held centrally on numbers of hospitals closed. We do however, keep information on hospital facilities approved for closure. From 1979 to end December 1986, 284 hospitals have been approved for closure in England. For closure outside England, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Since 1987 (to date) some 230 schemes (costing £1 million and over, building and engineering costs) have been completed to provide about 22,000 new beds. In addition many smaller schemes have provided facilities in response to the care in the community initiative.

Child Abuse

20. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to enable parents who have been accused of sexual abuse of children to have a second opinion provided from authorities outside their own local authority.

Mr. Newton: Parents can present their own evidence and expert medical opinion before the Court either in care proceedings or wardship and if they are prosecuted for alleged sexual abuse. The local authority's duty is to investigate and if need be apply for a place of safety order to protect the child. After assessment they may institute care proceedings. The assessment is multi-disciplinary with a substantial medical component for which the local authorities look to the health authorities who could arrange for a second opinion if this is thought appropriate. The Northern regional health authority has this week set up a pilot scheme under which cases of suspected child sexual abuse are discussed with consultants drawn from a special regional reference group.

30. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to combat child abuse.

Mr. Newton: We have under way a considerable programme of work designed to provide help and advice to social services departments, health authorities and other agencies with a role to play in combating child abuse. In particular, a new guide and circular on interagency working is being prepared, following the circulation of drafts last year. We have embarked on a special initiative to help training of staff, especially but not only on child sexual abuse. The first stage of this was announced in October 1986, the second in April 1987; and further projects are possible. We are also developing practice guidance for social workers and health visitors. All of this is additional to our continuing programme of research and development projects and assistance to voluntary organisations working in this field.

Social services provision for this work is decided by local authorities themselves who are responsible for deploying the resources available to them. The 1987-88 rate support grant provision for personal social services was a 12.9 per cent. increase on 1986-87 and included additional provision for children's services and for training.

Cancer Screening

21. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of women have responded to the initial call in those districts where cervical cancer call and recall schemes have been introduced.

Mrs. Currie: Information available from three of the first family practitioner committees to set up systems indicates that between 33 per cent. and 64 per cent. of women who received invitations to attend for screening responded, although some of the respondents merely gave a reason for not attending. After those who did not respond initially had been followed up the response rate rose to between 75 per cent. and 84 per cent.

Information on the response in other areas is not yet available centrally. It will be reported by health authorities in their annual outturn reports due next month.

34. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the target level of accuracy in National Health Service pathology laboratories for dealing with cervical smears.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

35. **Mrs. Ann Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information his Department has on delays in treating women whose cervical smears have proved positive.

Mrs. Currie: Responsibility for providing services for treatment of cervical cancer and related conditions lies with the local health authorities. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Dewsbury health authority for information concerning Dewsbury. We do not routinely collect such information centrally.

37. **Mr. Bradley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision he has made to monitor the standards of accuracy of cervical smear tests.

46. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the professional standards of private sector companies offering breast cancer screening.

50. **Mrs. Ruddock** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities use their own pathology laboratories for dealing with cervical smears; and how many put them out to private contractors.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Members have replies as soon as possible.

51. **Miss Mowlam** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether South Tees health authority has sufficient computer capacity to provide a full cervical cancer call and recall scheme.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that a full cervical cancer call and recall system is operating in South Tees health authority and that the district is meeting the four-week target for reporting on smear tests.

George Eliot Hospital, Nuneaton

28. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the capital building programme at George Eliot hospital in Nuneaton.

Mrs. Currie: Phase II of the capital building programme at the George Eliot hospital was completed earlier this year at a cost of £6.5 million. The first patients moved into the 54 acute beds provided on 30 May. Phase III of the development was approved in August 1986 and work on this £12 million scheme is due to start in July 1989, with completion due in April 1992.

Look After Your Heart Campaign

29. **Mr. Wood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement about the progress of the look after your heart campaign.

Mrs. Currie: The Look After Your Heart campaign, launched on 22 April, has generated considerable interest and continues to gather momentum. Because the main aim of this phase of the campaign is to raise public awareness

about the dangers of heart disease and what can be done to reduce or avoid the risk, further use of the mass media is planned, in particular a television advertising campaign starting in the late summer.

An important part of the campaign strategy is to involve industry, commerce and the workplace directly. One way this is being done is through a scheme of healthy living contracts in which employers and organisations undertake to support the principles underlying the campaign by a series of practical innovations which can include providing no-smoking areas and healthy menus in public restaurants and works canteens, displaying and disseminating campaign material to staff and the public, and introducing "Look After Yourself" courses in exercise, nutrition and stress management. A contract signing ceremony with a number of company chairmen was a feature of the campaign launch, and there will be a further signing by some leading British industrial and commercial organisations on 14 July. An industry pack which includes suggested action plans on smoking, alcohol, stress, nutrition and exercise, has been produced for use in industry and has been endorsed by both the CBI and the TUC.

Major food retailers are being encouraged to mount special promotions for healthier eating and negotiations are proceeding with various sectors of the food industry to encourage the wider availability of appropriate products.

A further major strand is the healthy cities programme. A growing number of cities and towns are forming joint action teams, involving health and local authorities, local business, voluntary organisations and other local interests, to mount health promotion programmes for this purpose.

Publications on various aspects of coronary heart disease have been produced to support the campaign. These include a leaflet about healthy living designed with the main target audience in mind, of which some 4 million will be distributed during 1987. Some four million copies of other leaflets on particular aspects of coronary heart disease are also being produced. A total of £2.5 million, an increase of £1 million on the original budget, will be devoted to the campaign in 1987-88.

Pensions

31. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present value of the basic pension for a single person as a percentage of average earnings; and what will be the corresponding figure in the year 2030 on the assumptions made in the statistical annex to the White Paper, "Reform of Social Security".

Mr. Scott: At estimated April 1987 figures, the basic pension for a single person is about 21 per cent. of gross average male manual workers' earnings. If earnings increased consistently by $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. a year more than prices, and pensions were increased only in line with prices throughout the next 43 years, the proportion would be 11 per cent. in 2030.

36. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will bring forward legislation to amend the rules for entitlement to full pension for women who marry prior to their 60th birthday to receive a full pension at the age of 60.

Mr. Scott: Where a married or single woman has retirement pension entitlement on her own contributions,

this can be received from age 60 if she satisfies the condition of retirement. Women whose pension entitlement derives from their husbands' contributions cannot receive a pension until they are 60 and the husband has reached the age of 65 and retired. We have no plans to change these rules, which have existed since the start of the national insurance scheme.

Severe Weather Payments

32. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to seek to improve the take-up of severe weather payments.

Mr. Scott: We are currently reviewing last winter's experience, including the question of publicity arrangements.

Personal Pension Schemes

33. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further measures he plans to encourage the spread of personal pension schemes.

Mr. Scott: The Government's aim is to encourage the spread of both personal and occupational pension coverage, through the new choices and incentives introduced by the Social Security Act 1986, so that many more people will have a pension of their own. Regulations under the Act which set out the detailed arrangements for the new types of pension schemes will be laid before Parliament later this week, and will help providers finalise details of their new products. It will be for those providers to promote their schemes, but I am considering what role the Department might best play in ensuring that people are aware of the new choices open to them as a result of our pension reforms.

Arthritis

22. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the number of specialist units available for the treatment of children suffering from serious arthritis.

Mrs. Currie: Apart from the internationally renowned centre at Northwick Park hospital, Harrow, we do not have detailed information about other centres that provide treatment for children with this condition.

Intra Uterine Transfusions

23. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many district health authorities have the facility to carry out intra uterine transfusions on pregnant women.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the number of district health authorities which have the facility to carry out intra uterine transfusions on pregnant women is not held centrally.

District General Hospital, Solihull

24. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement reporting progress with the new district general hospital for Solihull.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that building work on Solihull's new district general hospital is due to start in July 1989 and is expected to be completed in July 1992. Planning work is proceeding on schedule.

Competitive Tendering

38. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much he expects to be saved in 1987-88 by competitive tendering for cleaning, laundry and catering.

Mr. Newton: From estimates provided by regional health authorities and special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals, we expect new savings of some £39 million to accrue for the first time in the financial year 1987-88 from competitive tendering for cleaning, laundry and catering services. We also estimate that by the end of March 1987, annual savings generated by the competitive tendering initiative in England exceeded £93 million.

Care in the Community

39. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he proposes to increase resources for the provision of care in the community for the mentally handicapped and their families.

Mr. Newton: Health authorities' strategic plans envisage continued growth in overall expenditure on mentally handicapped people. Most regional health authorities have developed their own funding arrangements to assist the development of community services. Joint finance can also be used on extended terms if necessary. We are keeping an open mind about whether any further steps may be necessary.

The provision for personal social services in the rate support grant settlement for 1987-88 includes an extra £27 million for the development of community care generally. Decisions on priorities for local government spending are the responsibility of individual local authorities.

Social security costs will inevitably rise as normal benefits for people remaining in or returning to the community replace the personal allowances paid in hospital.

As my hon. Friend will be aware, the Government have asked Sir Roy Griffiths to undertake a review of community care, and to advise on options that would contribute to more effective care. This review will include consideration of whether the public funds used to support the community care policy are giving the best value for money, whether they are properly targeted, and whether the people assisted are being given the help most appropriate to their needs. The Government look forward to the completion of this review towards the end of the year.

NHS (Pay)

40. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present average annual salaries of midwives and health visitors employed in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: Information in the form requested is not available. The current basic salary scales for midwives and health visitors are given in the following table.

In addition staff midwives and midwifery sisters receive additional payments' mainly for working overtime and unsocial hours. Present average earnings (excluding London Weighting) of full-time staff midwives and midwifery sisters are estimated to be about 15 per cent. and 14 per cent. greater than basic pay.

Grade	Basic salary scales as at 1 April 1987	
	Minimum £	Maximum £
Staff midwife	7,300	8,600
Midwifery sister	9,000	12,000
Health visitor	10,100	12,250

Diabetics

41. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the future of the special diet allowance for diabetics on supplementary benefit.

Mr. Portillo: We have received correspondence from the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, and several other hon. Members, on behalf of the British Diabetic Association.

Cold Climate Allowance

42. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to introduce a cold climate allowance based on regional variations of temperature.

Mr. Scott: We, like previous Governments, are not persuaded that it would be right to deviate from the principle of national benefit levels.

Primary Health Care

43. **Sir David Price** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be able to reply to the First Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1986-87, of 27 January 1987, HC37, 1986-87, on primary health care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: As soon as possible.

Health Care (Bexley)

45. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from Bexley health authority concerning health care provision within the district.

Mrs. Currie: None.

Young Persons (Benefits)

25. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many young people have had their benefit reduced or suspended for either (a) refusing a YTS place or (b) leaving a scheme early.

Mr. Scott: From December 1983, when the Department started keeping records of these cases, to the end of May 1987 2,244 people have had their supplementary benefit reduced for refusing a youth training scheme place and 23,453 for leaving courses early, without good reason.

Mobility Allowances

47. **Mr. Battle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding mobility allowances.

Mr. Scott: We regularly receive representations about the qualifying conditions for mobility allowance, particularly in connection with individual claimants' appeals against decisions by the independent adjudicating authorities. Recently there have been more general representations about the age 75 limit, and about extending the medical eligibility criteria to include disabled people who can walk but are not independently mobile.

Nottingham Health Authority

48. **Mr. Allen** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to make up the £5 million shortfall in the funding of Nottingham health authority, as measured by criteria laid down by his Department in its evidence to the former Social Services Committee.

Mr. Newton: Decisions on allocations of funds to district health authorities are a matter for regions.

Cancer Unit (Southend-on-Sea)

49. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has recently received regarding the closure of the cancer unit at Southend-on-Sea, Essex.

Mrs. Currie: We have received this year six letters from hon. Members, and about 3,000 letters direct from members of the public, together with two petitions, about the closure of the radiotherapy department at Southend hospital. The North-East Thames regional health authority has proposed that the radiotherapy department is closed, but that most other cancer services will continue to be provided in Southend.

If we are required to make a final decision on the proposal, we will take into account all representations which have been received.

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986

26. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by what date he aims to have fully operational all the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

44. **Ms. Mahon** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in implementing all sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

56. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when Her Majesty's Government intend to implement in full the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Scott: Section 4, 8(1), 9 and 10 of the Act were brought into force on 1 April 1987. The Government have always made it clear that those sections of the Act which have significant resource implications will be implemented only when the necessary funds can be made available. Discussions with the local authority associations about the

costs of the various sections of the Act have been proceeding at official level, and I plan to meet the associations shortly to review progress. Decisions on the implementation of the outstanding sections can be taken only in the light of the outcome of these discussions.

63. **Mr. Alfred Morris** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations his Department has received about the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Scott: Since the beginning of this year 243 representations have been received from hon. Members and 20 from other people or organisations about the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. The majority of these have been concerned with implementation.

Ambulance Service (London)

53. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement concerning the recent disruption to emergency ambulance services in east London and the reasons for reductions in non-emergency ambulance services in the Greater London area.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Poverty and Unemployment Traps

54. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department is taking to help overcome the poverty and unemployment traps.

Mr. Scott: The Government have already taken the following measures to help improve work incentives. The basic rate of income tax has been reduced from 33 per cent. to 27 per cent. and since 1979 personal tax allowances have been increased by over 22 per cent. in real terms. Family income supplement prescribed amounts have been increased by a minimum of 13 per cent. in real terms and extra help has been given to families with older children. Since October 1985 national insurance contributions have been reduced for those with low earnings and for their employers. In addition, the Department of Employment's claimant advisers explain to job-seekers that rapid access to family income supplement and standard housing benefit can be provided for those re-entering employment. All these measures help to overcome either the poverty trap or the unemployment trap.

Looking ahead, the introduction of the reformed social security system in April 1988 will help alleviate the unemployment trap by bringing more generous help through family credit to double the number of working families that presently receive family income supplement. The alignment of the assessment rules for income-related benefits will also mean that people with similar incomes will be treated equally whether in or out of work. The poverty trap will be eased under the reformed structure because family credit and housing benefit will be assessed using net income. This will mean that it will no longer be possible for the withdrawal of in-work income related benefits to create a fall in net income when gross earnings rise.

Heating Allowances

55. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the level of heating allowances for the elderly.

Mr. Scott: Help with heating costs is provided through the supplementary benefit scale rates and heating additions. We have extended automatic entitlement to the basic rate heating addition to supplementary benefit householders aged 65 or over and the higher rate to householders aged 85 or over.

Family Credit

60. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many low income families will benefit from the new family credit when it is introduced in 1988.

Mr. Scott: On the basis of the illustrative amounts in the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmd. 9691), published in 1985, around 410,000 families would receive the credit.

Disabled People

61. **Miss Fookes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what new measures his Department is taking to help disabled people.

Mr. Scott: The new income support arrangements, which are to be introduced next April, will result in increased expenditure on people qualifying for the disablement premium. The Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys is carrying out a major survey of the needs of disabled people, which will be completed next year.

Benefits (Industrial Action)

62. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost to local authorities of payments made to claimants who have not received benefits because of industrial action in his Department.

Mr. Portillo: We do not have estimates of costs incurred by local authorities in making payments under section 1 of the Child Care Act 1980 or in Scotland section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. Such payments are the responsibility of the local authority. However, where local authorities have made interim payments of benefit during the current industrial action, the cost of the payments and reasonable administrative expenses will be reimbursed, so there should be no significant cost to the local authority.

Doctors and Surgeons (Merit Awards)

52. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will review the practice of merit awards to the medical and surgical professions.

Mr. Newton: We have no present plans to do so.

Legislative Proposals (Representations)

64. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received as a result of proposals in the Queen's Speech which affect his responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: None.

Nurses

16. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he will take to reduce the number of nurses leaving the National Health Service for nursing jobs abroad.

Mr. Newton: Nurses are free to seek employment wherever they choose. The National Health Service, being the major employer of nursing staff, is bound to lose some qualified staff abroad. We do however recognise the need to recruit and retain qualified staff and the recent pay increases for nurses, ranging from 5 per cent. to 12.7 per cent., are largest for qualified staff and reflected this need. There are also other central initiatives which have implications for the recruitment and retention of qualified staff.

Hospitals (Dorset)

66. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the hospital building programme in Dorset.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Pensioners

67. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to meet representatives of pensioners organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: My predecessor, together with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, met representatives of the National Pensioners' Convention in March, and representatives of the National Federation of Old Age Pensions Associations in April. I have no present plans for further meetings, but look forward to maintaining regular contact with the main pensioner organisations.

Mentally Handicapped Patients

27. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on progress in implementing care in the community as regards mentally handicapped patients.

Mr. Newton: Substantial progress has been and is being made. The majority of mentally handicapped people continue to live with their families or independently, usually supported by local authority, health or voluntary services. The number of mentally handicapped people living in NHS hospitals continues to fall while the numbers living in local authority homes and hostels and in small NHS units in the community have been increasing. The provision of local authority day services has increased. Relevant figures are available in the Department's various publications on health and personal social services statistics, copies of which are available in the Library.

Community Care

19. **Mr. Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects Sir Roy Griffiths to report on the current review of community care.

Mr. Newton: Sir Roy was asked to report by the end of this year.

58. **Mr. Blair** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has had on the level of provisions for community care.

59. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received regarding his Department's policy on community care.

Mr. Newton: From time to time the Department receives representations from organisations and individual members of the public regarding particular aspects of the Government's community care policy. Sir Roy Griffiths is currently conducting an overview of community care policy, and has been asked to report by the end of the year.

Health Funding (Leicestershire)

57. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he has taken to provide further financial support to Leicestershire health authority, following the meeting between the Minister for Health and hon. Members from Leicestershire constituencies on 9 April.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the hon. Members from Leicestershire constituencies for bringing the issue of health services in this district to my attention on 9 April. I explained at the meeting that allocations of funds to districts is a matter for regional health authorities. I have not yet had an opportunity to discuss with the region the representations made to me, but will do so as soon as possible. I know, however, that the Trent regional health authority is well aware of Leicestershire's needs and for this reason the district has received real terms growth of 34 per cent. since 1978-79. I understand that the district is on schedule to receive its target share of resources by 1994.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest figure for the change in the number of kidney transplants over a convenient 12-month period.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Nurse-Patient Ratio

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the information available to his Department on the nurse to patient ratio in England; and what information he has as to how this compares with France and Germany.

Mr. Newton: I regret that comparative data on nurse to patient ratios is not available; but the World Health Organisation does collect information on nurse to population ratios, for which the latest available figures show 498 nurses and midwives per 100,000 population in the United Kingdom compared to 346 in Germany and 304 in France. It should be noted, however, that these figures relate to different years and that there are differences in detail in the way they are compiled.

Pensioners (Energy Prices)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made as to the effect of energy prices on pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Fuel prices are included in the retail prices index which is used as a basis for the uprating of pensioners. Changes in energy prices are therefore taken into account automatically when pensions are increased to reflect the overall rise in the cost of living. The level of the heating additions paid with supplementary pension is determined with specific reference to the fuel elements of the retail prices index.

Regions (RAWP Allocation)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each region for each year since 1979-80 its capital resources allocation working party allocation as a percentage of its weighted population share.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Artificial Limbs (McColl Report)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the findings of the McColl report on artificial limbs; and whether he proposes to act upon any of its recommendations.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my predecessor on 10 March at columns 149-51.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Cryer asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of people in receipt of supplementary benefit in 1979 and 1986 and 1987 at the most recent practicable date.

Mr. Portillo: Figures from the quarterly statistical inquiry show that in February 1979 there were 2,964,000; in February 1986, 4,912,000; and February 1987, 5,008,000.

Mr. John Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the value in real terms of the long-term supplementary benefit rates for a single householder and a married couple as a proportion of average earnings compared with their value after the November 1977 uprating.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

	Supplementary benefit long-term scale rates as a percentage of net male manual earnings	
	Single householder	Couple
November 1977	34.6	51.5
April 1987	29.1	44.3

Benefits (Payment)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to extend the payment of social security benefits by private agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I have no such plans.

Warnock Report

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the Government's proposals for legislation on the matters raised in the Warnock report on human fertilisation and embryology.

Mr. Moore: The Government are aware of the deep concern felt about these complex issues and have indicated their intention to legislate in this Parliament. In preparation for that, a consultative document was issued last December for comments by the end of June. We are now studying carefully the views we are receiving and intend to set out our conclusions about the form legislation should take in a White Paper later this year. This will include proposals for alternative clauses about the issue of research on human embryos on which we have promised the House a free vote when legislation is introduced. We will give the House an opportunity for a debate on the White Paper so that we can take full account of hon. Members' views in the drafting of legislation.

AIDS

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether it is his intention to support the development of the AIDS health education and information unit in Paddington and North Kensington health authority as a demonstration project of good practice.

Mr. Newton: The AIDS health education and information unit is an important example of a local initiative complementing the national public education campaign. I am pleased to be able to announce that we are making £87,000 available in the current financial year to enable the project to develop its existing service and offer training and consultancy to other health authorities.

Innovative Products

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has decided the scope of protection for innovative products under article 1(iii) of European Community directive 87/21/EEC.

Mr. Newton: Yes. This directive was adopted last December and comes into force by 1 July this year. Among other matters, it amends the requirements for the submission of test and clinical trial results when applying for licences for medicinal products. In particular, where products are essentially similar to earlier "high technology" medicinal products detailed results have to be supplied for a period of 10 years from the licensing of the earlier product. The directive allows member states, if they judge it to be in the interest of the public health, to extend this 10-year period to apply to all medicinal products marketed in its territory. We have decided that this extension should apply in the United Kingdom, in line with similar decisions which we understand have been made by the majority of the major pharmaceutical-producing states in the European Community.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 1 July 1987

EMPLOYMENT

Women's Needs

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the main needs of women in the policy areas within the sphere of his Department's activities; what has been done to identify and quantify these needs and to monitor services delivery; what consultation is carried out with women to ensure their views are adequately represented; and what training is given to his staff to raise their appreciation of the needs of women.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government consider that in the employment field the main need of both women and men is the creation of new jobs. The Department of Employment's activities are directed to achieving this through deregulation and the development of the enterprise economy. Women as well as men have benefited from the employment, training and enterprise measures offered by my Department and the Manpower Services Commission, on which we have already spent in excess of £10 billion since 1979.

The Government nevertheless recognise that women have in the past been disadvantaged in the labour market and in consequence have special employment needs. Our equal opportunities policies are designed to address those needs and are described in detail in "The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women—A Review". This document was published in April 1987 and a copy has been placed in the Library.

We are fully apprised of women's views through the normal process of consultation and through our regular contacts with the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Women's National Commission and women's voluntary organisations. The Advisory Committee on Women's Employment exists to advise Employment Ministers on all aspects of our policies affecting women in the labour market, and my Department is also represented on the interdepartmental ministerial group on women's issues.

Training for staff at all levels within the Department of Employment group incorporates coverage of equal opportunities. Some courses have separate modules which specifically concentrate on the equal opportunities dimension, for example, a course for MSC "field" staff who have day-to-day responsibility for running programmes. This training ensures that staff fully understand the group's equal opportunities policy and the practical implications of that policy for the provision of services and for the group as employer.

Enterprise Allowance and Community Programme

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the criteria for the award of (a) enterprise allowance and (b) a community programme place.

Mr. Cope: The purpose of the enterprise allowance scheme is to help those unemployed people who would like to set up business on their own but are deterred from doing so because they would lose their entitlement to unemployment or supplementary benefit. To help ensure that the purpose of the scheme is met, applicants must be aged at least 18 and under 65 and have been unemployed and actively seeking work for at least eight weeks. Additionally, applicants must be directly or indirectly in receipt of unemployment benefit or supplementary benefit, have £1,000 available to invest in their proposed business, plan to work full time and be free from any restrictions on their employment in Great Britain.

The proposed business must be new, suitable for public support, be based in England, Scotland or Wales, and remain in the overall control of the applicant.

The community programme provides opportunities for long-term unemployed people to gain work experience on projects of community benefit. It is open to those aged 18 to 24 who have been unemployed for six out of the last nine months and those aged 25 to 62 who have been unemployed for 12 out of the last 15 months.

In addition, all applicants must have been continuously unemployed for the two months before they apply, and be directly or indirectly in receipt of an appropriate state benefit.

Small Firms

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Employment how much money has been lent by the banks to small firms under the Government's loan guarantee scheme; what is the number of firms involved; and what is the average amount of each loan and the losses to date under the scheme.

Mr. Cope: Bank lending of £586 million has been assisted by the scheme up to 31 May 1987. The average amount of each loan was £32,800. About 17,800 guaranteed loans were made to over 16,000 firms. The cost of claims net of premiums and other receipts has been £109 million.

Television Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the impact on employment opportunities in the television manufacturing industry in the light of the recent purchase of the Ferguson Group by Thomson.

Mr. Lee: It is too early to assess the effect of the purchase. Decisions on employment levels are of course for the manufacturing companies themselves.

Window Cleaners

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many times inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive have visited commercial window cleaners in the last five years.

Mr. Cope: I regret that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many accidents involving window cleaners have been reported to the Health and Safety Executive in the last five years;

(2) how many fatal accidents involving window cleaners have been reported to the Health and Safety Executive in the last five years.

Mr. Cope: 18 fatal injuries to window cleaners were reported to the Health and Safety Executive during the five years 1981 to 1985. Provisional records show two fatalities in 1986. The provisional number of non-fatal injuries reported to HSE in the 12 months from April 1986 was 26. The number of accidents prior to 1986 is not readily available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost. Accidents which occur at premises not subject to inspection by HSE are reportable to local authorities.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what safety measures the Health and Safety Executive recommend to window cleaners;

(2) what measures are being taken by the Health and Safety Executive to improve safety for window cleaners.

Mr. Cope: Guidance note GS 25 "Prevention of Falls to Window Cleaners", published by the Health and Safety Executive in 1985, provides technical advice for window cleaners on safety matters. It also gives advice on the legal duties of employers, employees, the self-employed and persons in control of premises under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

The Health and Safety Executive and local authority environmental health departments are currently taking a joint initiative in north London to promote safety for window cleaners. Factory inspectors and environmental health officers are visiting the head offices of window cleaning firms and sites to provide advice and take enforcement action where appropriate.

Unemployment Benefit

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been denied unemployment benefit since November 1986 because they are not available for work because they have an adult or a child to care for during working hours.

Mr. Lee: Some claimants to unemployment benefit have always been disallowed benefit by independent statutory adjudicating authorities in accordance with long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments because they were not available for work. Departmental records do not identify the reasons which lead to claimants being disallowed benefit on the grounds that they are not available for work.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Servants (Radio and Television Programmes)

Mr. Sparing asked the Prime Minister what plans Her Majesty's Government have for permitting or facilitating members of the Civil Service to speak or appear on radio or television programmes.

The Prime Minister: The Government have no plans to change the present guidance on the appearance of civil servants on radio or television programmes. Civil servants are permitted to take part in broadcasts, so long as they do not engage in discussion of politically controversial matters. Whilst, therefore, they may in certain circumstances describe and explain Government policies, it is for Ministers to justify those policies and to defend them in party political terms.

European Council (Budgetary Controls)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the application of the strict budgetary controls agreed at the European Council meeting of 4 December 1984; and if she is satisfied with the progress made in budgetary control.

The Prime Minister: As I said in the answer which I gave my hon. Friend on 18 November last, column 85, the control of European Community spending is a constant battle. In all discussions on this subject in the Community the Government have insisted, and will continue to insist, on the paramount need to improve budget discipline and management, taking account of the Council's conclusions of December 1984.

I also refer my hon. Friend to the statement that I made today.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Playgrounds

Ms. Quin asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of playgrounds in schools are made of concrete.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not available. The large majority of school playgrounds are made either of asphalt, or of concrete over which a tarmacadam surface is laid.

Ms. Quin asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what studies have been made about the feasibility of introducing substances safer than concrete to be used in playgrounds, including wooden blocks.

Mr. Dunn: In 1978 my Department sent to all chief education officers, for information, a copy of a Department of Environment circular letter advising authorities of the need for improved safety in children's playgrounds and including a technical appendix on the characteristics of various impact-absorbing surfaces that were considered for use beneath park playground apparatus. Wooden blocks were not mentioned; wood chips, although soft, were regarded as being difficult to maintain and clean. Local education authorities were invited to consider at the time whether any of the advice contained in the letter was felt to be applicable to school playground areas, particularly where climbing apparatus was being installed.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what help he proposes to give the Natural Environment Research Council to enable it to maintain research at the grant-aided Freshwater Biological Association Laboratories.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend allocates funds each year to the Natural Environment Research Council and other research councils, after the Government have determined the overall funding available. In reaching this decision he takes account of advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. Within the sum provided, the council is expected to determine its own priorities for the support of relevant research within its own establishments and grant-aided institutions.

Women's Needs

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the main needs of girls and women in the policy areas within the sphere of his Department's activities; what has been done to identify and quantify these needs and to monitor services delivery; what consultation is carried out with women to ensure their views are adequately represented; and what training is given to his staff to raise their appreciation of the needs of girls and women.

Mrs. Rumbold: The main needs of girls and women in education are equal opportunities for study to enable them equally to benefit from the advantages education confers. My Department, drawing on advice from Her Majesty's Inspectorate, has identified areas of the curriculum in schools and of higher education in which there has been a historically low participation by girls and sought to increase it, monitoring the results by statistical means. Opportunities for consultation exist through liaison with the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Women's National Commission. Staff in relevant branches of the Department are made aware of the need to bear in mind the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and ensure that the needs of women are taken into account in policy formulation and administration.

Schools (Change of Character)

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to seek to alter the arrangement under which local education authorities apply to him for permission to cease to maintain or to change the character of a school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no plans to alter the existing statutory arrangements.

East Devon College of Further Education

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why his decision as to phase 2 of the East Devon college of further education, promised for the end of March, is still outstanding; and whether he will announce it without further delay.

Mr. Dunn: This project was submitted by Devon LEA as a candidate for the local authority further and higher education major building programme 1988-89. It is under consideration, together with the bids submitted by other LEAs in England. The delay in responding to LEAs' bids is regretted and an announcement will be made as soon as possible. However, my right hon. Friend will not be in a position to inform LEAs of their capital expenditure allocations for 1988-89 until the end of this year.

TRANSPORT

Motorways (Maintenance)

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport by what date he expects the maintenance work currently in progress at and near junction 10 of the M1 motorway to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The contractor hopes to complete the work by mid-October.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider restricting heavy commercial vehicles to the nearside lane only when, due to maintenance work, motorways are reduced to two-lane traffic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This would not be advisable. It would lead to one lane being heavily overused and the other operating at under capacity.

All heavy goods vehicles would necessarily have to run at the speed of the slowest vehicle. This could lead to frustration on the part of their drivers, and in turn lead to risk-taking and excessive speeds when they reached the end of the works. We consider it is safer to have two lanes running more or less equally, rather than one running much faster than the other.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to minimise disruption to holiday traffic on motorways due to maintenance and repair work being carried out during this summer.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All lane closures are carefully planned to keep delay and inconvenience to a minimum. The Department's agents work to national guidelines in respect of layout and spacing between works.

We have substantially increased the number of contracts let on a "lane rental" basis whereby contractors can earn bonuses for early completion. This has proved successful in reducing the time of occupation for works to be carried out.

In areas known to be heavily trafficked throughout the summer holiday period, such as the south-west, only essential works are carried out at this time. Wherever practicable works are lifted from all major holiday routes at peak periods such as bank holidays.

M4 (Partial Closure)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Transport for how long it is intended to close the London end of the M4 motorway at night; and whether there is any way by which one lane of it each way could be left open.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Alternative closures of the east bound and west bound carriageways at the London end of the M4 motorway are expected to continue until Friday 17 July. The maintenance work being undertaken is the replacement of bridge expansion joints. Safety considerations require the whole carriageway in one direction to be closed while the work is in progress.

Motorways (Service Areas)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate the Government's general policy on the development of new service areas on motorways and other trunk roads in England.

Mr. Channon: Our general policy for motorways is to secure service areas at strategic points roughly 30 miles apart. There are 41 such areas already open in England. A further 19 are planned. The aim is to provide the consumer with an adequate range of choice and good value for money, while upholding the highest standards of road safety and securing a return to the Exchequer. Save in exceptional circumstances, we believe that this is best achieved by promoting full and fair competition between

firms providing such services, subject to our having adequate control over the initial development and subsequent use of sites.

Our general policy for trunk roads is to continue to rely on private initiative for the identification, development and management of such sites. It is essential for road safety and traffic reasons to exercise strict control over the new developments which involve formation or an intensified use of accesses to such roads. It is, nevertheless, apparent that there are roads on which there are not at present adequate facilities for motorists. We believe that these needs will best be met in general by a comprehensive provision of services on single sites rather than a spread of individual facilities. It is intended to promote discussions with the local authority associations and the private sector on the identification of such sites and the sort of provision to be made on them.

We believe that these policies represent the most effective way forward to meeting the future needs of motorists on our motorways and trunk roads. I am placing in the library a fuller statement of these policies.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Voting

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for each parliamentary constituency in Greater Manchester, how many people were granted postal votes; how many applications for postal votes were refused; how many postal votes returned too late to be included in the count; what percentage of postal votes were valid and what representations he has received from returning officers about the new procedure for postal votes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information is being obtained in respect of each constituency in the United Kingdom on the number of persons shown on the absent votes lists as entitled to vote by post, on the number of postal ballot papers returned before the close of the poll and on the number of those ballot papers included at the start of the count. This information will be published in "Election Expenses" around the end of the year. We have not yet received all the postal ballot papers returns from the constituencies in the Greater Manchester area and I shall write to the hon. Member when they are complete. Information is not collected centrally on the number of applications for postal votes which were refused, nor are electoral registration officers obliged to record this information. We have received a number of suggestions for ways in which the new absent voting procedures could be improved and we shall take these into account in our review of these procedures.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of different waiting times for interviews by the immigration service according to the geographical area in the United Kingdom of residence of the interviewee.

Mr. Renton: The position varies in different areas of the United Kingdom, subject to the type of interview required, and comprehensive information is not readily available. During the peak period of traffic through the ports priority is given to immigration control on entry. Other

urgent interviews, however, continue to be undertaken during the peak summer months. At the end of the summer season, additional immigration service resources are devoted to outstanding cases.

Crime (Use of Knives)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to institute a campaign against the selling and carrying of knives for offensive purposes; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what legislative steps are being proposed regarding the sale of certain types of knives which can be used for offensive and criminal purposes; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations have been made to him by the police and other authorities regarding the sale of knives which can be used for offensive and criminal purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received a number of representations from the police representative organisations, police consultative groups, local authorities, hon. Members and members of the public about the availability of offensive weapons, including knives, and their use in crime. We have also received reports of the local initiatives to increase awareness among the public about the dangers of these weapons, which we welcome and support.

As my right hon. Friend announced to hon. Members yesterday, we have already set in hand a study of how the law relating to the possession of knives and other sharp bladed instruments might be reinforced. He will be considering urgently how best to take matters forward in the light of that study.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the figures relating to the use of knives in criminal offences which have occurred in England and Wales in the past five years and the overall percentage increase in this period.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the use of weapons other than firearms in recorded notifiable offences is not collected centrally, except in respect of offences of homicide. Statistics of homicides are published each year in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 4.3 in the volume for 1985, Ctn. 10)

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Footwear Industry (Trade Exhibitions)

Mr. Fry asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will ask the British Overseas Trade Board to reconsider its decision to reduce its support for trade exhibitions in North America on behalf of the British footwear industry.

Mr. Alan Clark: The BOTB has decided not to support the footwear industry in 1987-88 at the National Shoes Fair in New York, as it has done in previous years. Even though it supports some 330 events each year, involving some 7,000 British companies, the BOTB cannot meet all the demands for such assistance. It has, therefore, to balance the needs of well-established sectors in a particular market with those of newcomers. As part of its extensive North American programme the board is supporting a number of other shows which include footwear, and if

circumstances permit it to add new events to the programme during the year, it will take full account of the footwear industry's views.

Japan (Sales Duty)

Mr. Fry asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to which British industries, when trading with Japan, face a 60 per cent duty on all sales to that country once the tariff quota is exceeded.

Mr. Alan Clark: Leather, leather goods and footwear are the only industries falling into this category.

Furniture (Fire Resistance)

Mr. Ward asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take steps to ban the use of polyurethane foam in domestic furniture in view of the toxic fumes created when fire occurs.

Mr. Maude: No. As with the burning of most organic substances, the main toxic gas produced by burning polyurethane foam is carbon monoxide.

I am today issuing a consultation document setting out a draft code of practice on ignition resistance of upholstered furniture.

Recent developments in polyurethane technology offer foams which, when used in furniture, appear to burn less rapidly and with the production of less smoke and toxic gas. I believe that the way forward is to encourage the use of these better types of foam filling in furniture manufacture as quickly as possible, rather than banning a material which has many excellent qualities.

Mr. Ward asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will make it his policy to bring commercial recovering of domestic furniture within the law relating to fire resistance of domestic upholstered furniture;

(2) when he intends to introduce regulations leading to a higher standard of fire resistance in domestic upholstered furniture; and if he will make a statement on the standards to be introduced.

Mr. Maude: I am today issuing a consultation document setting out a draft code of practice on ignition resistance of upholstered furniture. A number of options are proposed in that document: I am satisfied that all would provide for a degree of improved safety in their various ways, whether by requiring the use of match resistant covering fabric or by requiring the use of more fire-resistant foam or other filling.

Following consultation, I propose to make new regulations to replace those made in 1980 and amended in 1983 in order to make mandatory the code of practice.

The mandatory code of practice approach offers a direct way of dealing with loose covers and commercial re-covering of furniture within the same regulations, which a mandatory match test for complete items of furniture cannot do.

Mr. Ward asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to extend the controls relating to fire resistance of domestic furniture to beds and other everyday items currently outside the law.

Mr. Maude: I intend to make use of the general safety requirement in the Consumer Protection Act 1987 to set

an acceptable standard of fire resistance for beds and mattresses. This will be done by approval of the British standard specification for the ignition resistance of mattresses when this is finalised. Equally, if other standard specifications are prepared indicating a minimum level of fire resistance for other everyday domestic items, I shall consider approving these also.

Mr. Cryer asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation to ensure that fire safety regulations for furniture sold for use in the home are stringently applied; if he is satisfied that there are adequate safeguards to ensure that toys are not inflammable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude [pursuant to his reply, 30 June 1987, c. 58]: It is for local authorities to enforce regulations controlling the fire safety of upholstered furniture made under the Consumer Safety Act 1978, whose provisions have now been subsumed in the Consumer Protection Act 1987. There is no need for additional enforcement legislation. The present Toy (Safety) Regulations are inadequate in respect of the flammability requirements. The draft European directive on toy safety, which will considerably extend those requirements, was accepted in principle by the Council of Ministers on 10 June and is now before the European Parliament. If the directive is adopted, regulations to implement the directive will be introduced in due course.

Children's Nightwear

Mr. Ward asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to alter the law regarding the material of, and the warnings concerned with, children's nightwear.

Mr. Maude: No. The Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985 came into force on 1 March this year. Children's nightdresses, dressing gowns and bathrobes (except bathrobes made from cotton terry towelling) for children must pass a strict flammability test. Other nightwear garments for children and adults must carry a permanent label showing their flammability performance.

The Nightwear (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1987 defer until 1 September of this year the coming into force of the requirements of the 1985 regulations with respect to the labelling of garments for babies under the age of three months.

Ferguson Group

Mr. Hoyle asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he received about the sale of the Ferguson Group by its owners, Thorn EMI, prior to its public announcement.

Mr. Butcher: The company informed my Department of the proposed sale at the same time as it made its public announcement.

Television Sets (Production)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the prospect for the mass production of televisions in the United Kingdom, in the light of the recent purchase of the Ferguson Group by Thomson.

Mr. Butcher: The implications of the proposed acquisition of Thorn EMI Ferguson by Thomson Grand Public will depend upon future decisions by Thomson on how it will run the business. Although Ferguson is the single largest manufacturer in the United Kingdom, there are nine other major companies established in television manufacture here, several of which are expanding their production. Plans by at least two additional companies to enter production are also well advanced.

Lawnmowers (Noise)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many power lawnmowers have been checked by the officers appointed by his Department to establish whether the noise they make is consistent with the Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert Atkins: The Lawnmowers (Harmonisation of Noise Emission Standards) Regulations 1986 do not make provision for appointing officers to carry out checks to establish whether the noise powered lawnmowers make is consistent with them.

The regulations came into force on 18 November 1986 and introduce into United Kingdom law the European Community article 100 directive on the approximation of the laws of member states relating to the permissible sound power level of lawnmowers (84/538/EEC). The directive has to be applied as from 1 July 1987 and our regulations were introduced in advance of that date in order to give manufacturers and importers opportunity to obtain reports on the tests carried out on each type of lawnmower for the purpose of self-certification in readiness for marketing on or after 1 July 1987. I am aware that some of the nine appointed test laboratories have been making such reports for some time, but as the manufacturers apply direct to the test laboratory my Department does not get involved or record the numbers involved.

The regulations empower the Secretary of State to carry out checks on the manufacturers continuing production, but no such checks have as yet been made.

Director General of Telecommunications (Report)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has yet received a report by the Director General of Telecommunications for the year 1986, as required under section 55 of the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Mr. Butcher: Yes. The third report by the Director General of Telecommunications is being published today. It covers the period 1 January to 31 December 1986. Copies of the report have been laid before each House of Parliament.

Consumer Council

Mr. Stern asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the Consumer Council held on 10 June.

Mr. Maude: The Council reached agreement on a directive to harmonise legislation prohibiting products which, usually as a novelty, are made or packaged to appear like food or drink, and could be dangerous, especially to children. The Council also reached agreement

in principle on a directive to provide common rules for toy safety throughout the community. Formal adoption will not take place in June, however, as the European Parliament's opinion is still awaited.

The Council reached agreement on resolutions responding to reports by the Commission on consumer access to justice, and on a possible general obligation at community level to produce and market only safe goods. The Commission will be undertaking further work on both subjects.

The Council also recorded conclusions on the fundamental elements which should form the basis for a settlement of the proposed unit pricing directives; and agree that a Commission proposal for a child safety information and awareness campaign should be examined further.

ENERGY

Women's Needs

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the main needs of women in the policy areas within the sphere of his Department's activities; what has been done to identify and quantify these needs and to monitor services delivery; what consultation is carried out with women to ensure their views are adequately represented; and what training is given to his staff to raise their appreciation of the needs of women.

Mr. Parkinson: Officials in my Department act in accordance with the Government's commitment to the policy of equal opportunities for men and women. Staff receive training on equal opportunities, for men and women as part of normal management training. We also seek to ensure that women are represented on advisory and consultative bodies on energy matters.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

European Community Development Council

Mr. Temple-Morris asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Community Development Council on 21 May.

Mr. Chris Patten: The United Kingdom was represented at official level. Conclusions were adopted welcoming the Commission's intention to propose a Community programme to combat AIDS in developing countries, in close co-ordination with the World Health Organisation's special programme on AIDS. Conclusions were also adopted on the importance of improving public awareness of development issues, and on the value of the private sector in development.

It was agreed there should be detailed debates on the situation in sub-Saharan Africa, on the evaluation of previous aid and (at the United Kingdom's suggestion) on the environmental aspects of development projects at the next Council.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inland Revenue

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the speed with which Inland Revenue offices deal with taxpayers' affairs.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Over the last 18 months there has been a significant improvement in the time taken to reply to taxpayers' inquiries, and most of the annual cycle of other work is being completed on time.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has of the effect on retailers of the delay arising from the break-down of the value added tax computer at Shoeburyness in the repayments of moneys due to them; if he will take steps to ensure the earliest possible repayment of such moneys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EC Budget (United Kingdom Contribution)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total net contribution made by the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community in each of the previous five years; and if these figures take account of the transfer from European Economic Community to national responsibility of expenditure on agricultural policies like the disposal of butter surpluses.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Liverpool Freeport

Mr. Parry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he is satisfied with the working of the Liverpool freeport; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has assessed what effects the Manx freeport will have on the Liverpool freeport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

WALES

Cartrefle College

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what decisions were made regarding the future of Cartrefle college at the last meeting of the committee of the Welsh Advisory Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: At its last meeting the WAB committee considered a report by a joint UGC WAB working group which recommended the phasing out of initial teacher training at Cartrefle college which is part of the North East Wales institute of higher education. The committee advised that before final decisions are taken the Clwyd local education authority should be consulted to give it and NEWI an opportunity to comment on the implications for the institute of implementing the working group's recommendation. This is being done.

Charity-owned Farms

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will estimate how many charity-owned farms there are in Wales; and in each county in Wales; and which charities are involved;

(2) how many charity-owned farms exist within the present environmentally sensitive areas in Wales; and which charities are involved.

Mr. Peter Walker: Records are not kept of the number of charity-owned farms in Wales and there is no information available on which to base an estimate.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the position of tenants of charity-owned farms in relation to the environmentally sensitive areas scheme in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The position of tenants of charity-owned farms in relation to the environmentally sensitive area scheme in Wales depends on the particular circumstances of the tenancy agreement and each case would be treated on its merits.

A possible conflict would arise only if the charity that owns the land has received public money in connection with the purchase or management of the land.

If the tenant pays a full agricultural rent and has a normal tenancy agreement there should be no reason why he could not qualify for an ESA management agreement. If, however, the tenancy agreement requires him to farm in an environmentally sensitive way, and in return he pays a lower rent, it would be necessary to consider carefully whether the further benefit of ESA payment would be justified.

Lead Plumbing

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of properties in Wales with lead plumbing; and what proportion of the total this figure represents.

Mr. Grist: The latest available estimate derived from the 1981 Welsh house condition survey is that there were 294,000 dwellings with drinking-cooking water pipes made of lead, representing 27 per cent. of the total stock.

SCOTLAND

Illegal Fishing (River Forth)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from James Mackie, Her Majesty's Inspector of Fisheries, about an incident involving illegal drift net fishing in the Forth, in the early hours of Friday 26 June; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations from Mr. James Mackie regarding illegal fishing in the Forth on 26 June 1987.

Community Charge

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his estimate of the number of canvassers required for house visits in Lothian region in order to collect the information required for the proposed community charge;

(2) what is his estimate of the costs of collection in Lothian region of the community charge from fully rebated persons;

(3) what estimate he has made of the cost in Lothian region of updating the proposed community charge register each month;

(4) what is his estimate of the cost of a postal canvass in Lothian region of all persons above 18 years of age to establish and register for the proposed community charge.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has made no such estimates.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what sanctions he proposes against any individual over 18 years of age who fails to notify the authority applying a community charge of a change of abode.

Mr. Lang: The arrangements for the imposition of civil penalties in these circumstances are set out in section 18 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Act 1987.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to reimburse Lothian region for the salaries of the extra staff needed to implement his community charge proposals in Lothian region.

Mr. Lang: The costs to be incurred by local authorities in implementing the community charge will be taken into account when determining provision for relevant expenditure and aggregate exchequer grant for 1988-89. The distribution of provision and grant amongst local authorities is based upon the client group approach to assessment of relative expenditure need, which is developed in consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

ENVIRONMENT

Air Pollution

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking legislation based upon the proposals contained in the Green Paper on air pollution control.

Mr. Moynihan: We have received 442 responses to the proposals in the consultation paper reviewing air pollution control legislation in Great Britain. Where they gave permission, copies of these replies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and of the Department to which the response was sent.

Women's Needs

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the main needs of women in the policy areas within the sphere of his Department's activities; what has been done to identify and quantify these needs and to monitor services delivery; what consultation is carried out with women to ensure their views are adequately represented; and what training is given to his staff to raise their appreciation of the needs of women.

Mr. Ridley: The policies of my Department meet the needs of men and women equally. Specific measures taken by my Department which are of particular benefit to women are set out in the Government response to the

United Nations "Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women", published on 29 April. The views of women on these measures and policies are welcome and, my Department actively consults women's organisations in appropriate cases. Equal opportunities training, including that designed to raise awareness of the needs of women, is included in all my Department's main management courses.

Local Government Boundary Commission

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the timetable of work of the Local Government Boundary Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Under the Local Government Act 1972 the commission has to review every 10 to 15 years the areas and boundaries of counties, London boroughs and metropolitan districts, and the boundaries of the City of London. The current round of these reviews has to end by 31 March 1992. Reviews of non-metropolitan districts and consideration of districts' reviews of parishes may be at any time, as necessary. In addition, the commission has to review the electoral arrangements for counties, London boroughs and districts, every 10 to 15 years from its last report on the area concerned. Subject to these statutory requirements and to any direction under powers conferred by the Act on the Secretary of State the commission has discretion to, and does set its own timetable.

Stoke Gabriel (Public Inquiry)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will postpone the public inquiry under section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 in relation to footpath No. 2 (Part) Stoke Gabriel, Public Path Diversion Order 1986, as requested in the letter from the hon. Member for South Hams to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 23 May, following representations from the Stoke Gabriel parish council.

Mr. Moynihan: No. It is considered that a postponement at this late stage may be prejudiced to other objectors who have already made arrangements to attend. Should any party wish to pursue the question of a delay, they would have the opportunity at the opening of the inquiry to request the inspector to adjourn to a later date.

Rates (Collection)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what actual or estimated percentage of rate income to local authorities in England and Wales is expended in its collection.

Mr. Howard: The cost of rate collection was about 1.2 per cent of rates paid in England and Wales in 1986-87.

Spectrum Arena, Warrington

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any proposals on the future of the Spectrum Arena, Warrington, what discussions he has had with the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation; and what information he has as to whether the Spectrum Arena has been offered for sale to Warrington borough council.

Mrs. Roe: My right hon. Friend has not received any proposals on the future of the Spectrum Arena, or had any discussions on the matter, subsequent to the closure of the arena last year. The arena is currently available for purchase, following the discontinuance earlier this year of negotiations with a prospective buyer. It is open to the borough council to make an offer.

Albert Dock, Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to visit the Albert dock, Liverpool.

Mr. Trippier: I visited the Albert dock in Liverpool on 22 June 1986 as part of a tour of the Merseyside Development Corporation's designated area. My right hon. Friend hopes to visit Merseyside in the near future.

Merseyside Development Corporation

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the working of the Merseyside Development Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I am very satisfied with the working of the Merseyside Development Corporation. In 1981 the corporation was set up to secure the regeneration of 350 hectares of derelict docklands. Its progress has been spectacular. 166 hectares have been reclaimed, including the site of the acclaimed Liverpool international garden festival in 1984. 120,000 m³ of buildings have been refurbished for new uses, including the largest grade I listed building in the country, the Albert dock; factory units have been provided in Bootle and at the Brunswick business park in the South docks, and Wapping warehouse is being refurbished to provide flats; all in partnership with the private sector or other agencies. This successful partnership is bringing new uses and a new pride to the docklands, creating a climate of confidence in which people are prepared to invest.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to expand the Merseyside Development Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We have no plans to expand Merseyside Development Corporation at present.

Merseyside Task Force

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he is satisfied with the working of the task force on Merseyside; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to expand the task force on Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The Merseyside task force deals with a range of functions appropriate to a regional office of my Department, including housing matters, derelict land grant, the urban programme and the funding of the Merseyside Development Corporation. It is involved also with local authorities, the Housing Corporation and private companies in promoting special initiatives to tackle particular problems in the area. There is close collaboration at local level with the Department of Industry MSC, and other Government Departments.

The task force continues to make an important contribution to the Government's policies aimed at securing the regeneration of the area.

Business Rates

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the likely level of uniform business rate which is to be established in consequence of the measure outlined in the Gracious Speech; and whether he estimates that business ratepayers in Essex and Southend on Sea, respectively, will pay more or less in rates as a direct consequence of the proposed reform.

Mr. Howard: The average non-domestic rate poundage in 1987-88 in England is 224.1p. Had a national non-domestic rate been fully introduced this year at that level the rate poundage in Southend would have increased by 1½ per cent. In the rest of Essex changes would have ranged from an increase of 5 per cent. in Chelmsford to a reduction of 22 per cent. in Harlow.

These figures do not take into account the effect of the revaluation on non-domestic rates, timed to come into effect in 1990.

Community Charge

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from borough treasurers about the administration of the proposed community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Association of District Council Treasurers and the Society of Metropolitan Treasurers responded to the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714). Both accepted the need to reform local government finance, but expressed concern about the proposal for a community charge, partly on administrative grounds. It was because of such concerns that the Government published on 15 December 1986 a document setting out how the community charge will work.

A number of other representations were received from borough treasurers writing on behalf of their councils. A summary of all the responses to the Green Paper was placed in the Library on 15 December.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the likely cost to local authorities of collecting a community charge as opposed to domestic rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I shall answer this question shortly.

LDDC (Job Statistics)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will tabulate for the latest convenient date the number of jobs (a) transferred from outside, (b) newly created and (c) displaced or lost in each of the three boroughs within the area of the London Docklands Development Corporation since its inception, together with their respective totals.

Mr. Trippier: A total of 7,897 jobs have been created between the establishment of the corporation in July 1981 and 31 March 1987. These can be broken down as follows:

Borough	Number of jobs
Newham	1,895
Southwark	1,192
Tower Hamlets	4,810
TOTAL	7,897

Of these, 5,059 jobs were in establishments transferred from outside the UDA and 2,838 were created in new enterprises. A breakdown by borough is not available.

In the answer given by my hon. Friend the former Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 6 April 1987, at column 26, he explained that an estimated 85 docklands firms have been relocated outside the area; 20 of these were from Newham, 32 from Southwark and 33 from Tower Hamlets. A total of 3,355 jobs have been notified by the MSC as lost between 1981 and 31 March 1987 as a result of firm closures or other redundancies. Information by borough is not available.

Housing

Mr. Allen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether the major reform of housing legislation foreshadowed in the Queen's Speech will include measures to empower local councils to sell off council estates, or parts thereof, to private companies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has about the number of local councils which, under current legislation, have disposed of council estates, or parts thereof, to private companies; and if he will list the authorities concerned.

Mr. Waldegrave: Local authorities may dispose of housing and housing land with the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. A general consent has been granted for the disposal of vacant housing for owner-occupation; disposals of tenanted housing, other than to sitting tenants, require special consent. Consents were granted, in 1983 and 1984, for the disposal of the Cantril Farm estate by Knowsley borough council to the Stockbridge Village trust and of the Strinesdale estate by Oldham borough council to the Irwin Group.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC Policies

15. Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further proposals he intends to place before his European Community partners for the development of Community policies.

Mrs. Chalker: The Community's most urgent priority is to agree measures to ensure the control of expenditure. We shall play a leading role in the discussions which will now continue to introduce stabilising mechanisms for agricultural commodities and on the application of budgetary discipline to all the Community's expenditure.

Iraq

16. Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to meet the ambassador of Iraq in London to discuss Anglo-Iraqi relations.

Mr. Mellor: The ambassador of Iraq will be calling on me on Wednesday 8 July.

Terrorism

17. Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government policy regarding the sale of arms to terrorist forces.

Mr. Mellor: It is our firm policy not to sell arms to terrorist forces.

Blowpipe Missiles

18. Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had during his visit to refugee camps in Pakistan in April 1986, about the provision of Blowpipe missiles to Afghan persons or organisations opposed to the Kabul régime; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) on 7 May 1986, during my visit to the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan I listened to representations from the refugees on the situation in Afghanistan and made clear our view that the key to peace is the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops. As regards arms supplies, I have nothing to add to my statement on 26 June in the foreign affairs debate.

Australia

19. Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Australia.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend visited Australia from the 22 to 28 April. Relations continue to be excellent. We look forward to celebrating together the bicentennial anniversary of European settlement in 1988.

Ethiopia

26. Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning relations with Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: I visited Ethiopia from 9 to 11 April and had frank and open discussions with members of the Government. I drew attention to the European Community statement of 21 July 1986 in favour of a peaceful settlement of conflicts in the region and the encouragement of local agricultural production to prevent further famine. We have made clear our concern for human rights in Ethiopia.

Washington

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to make an official visit to Washington.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no firm plans at this stage, but would expect to visit Washington in due course as part of his regular series of meetings with Mr. Shultz.

British Council

22. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase the resources available to the British Council.

23. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to increase the funding of the British Council.

Mr. Eggar: The British Council's requirements are considered, in the context of other priorities, in the annual public expenditure survey.

Arms Control

24. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress concerning arms control.

25. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning British policy on intermediate nuclear forces.

39. **Mr. Cryer** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet the United States Secretary of State to discuss arms control issues.

53. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning North Atlantic Treaty Organisation policy in intermediate nuclear forces.

58. **Mr. Burt** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British priorities for arms control negotiations.

65. **Sir Gerard Vaughan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation position on arms control.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There has been significant progress in recent weeks in the United States/Soviet negotiations on intermediate range nuclear missiles. The Reykjavik meeting of the North Atlantic Council last month called on the Soviet Union to accept global elimination of United States and Soviet longer and shorter range intermediate nuclear forces missiles. NATO Ministers also confirmed the direction of future arms control negotiations: 50 per cent. cuts in strategic weapons; global elimination of chemical weapons; and an agreement to redress imbalances in conventional weapons.

On conventional weapons, informal contacts between NATO and Warsaw pact representatives have been under way in Vienna since mid-February on the terms of reference for new talks on conventional stability covering the Atlantic to the Urals. Steady progress is being made.

32. **Ms. Ruddock** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with the United States Government about a treaty banning intermediate nuclear forces from Europe.

Mr. Mellor: The United States Government is in close and regular contact with ourselves and other partners in NATO about the negotiations on intermediate nuclear forces. As part of the process my right hon. and learned Friend, discussed the INF negotiations with Mr. Shultz last month at the economic summit in Venice and at the

North Atlantic Council in Reykjavik. We support the United States proposal for global elimination of US and Soviet longer and shorter range intermediate nuclear missiles.

61. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress at the arms control negotiations in Geneva.

Mr. Mellor: As indicated in my earlier reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) there has been useful progress in recent weeks in the US/Soviet negotiations on intermediate range nuclear missiles. In the strategic arms reduction and space-defence groups significant difficulties remain. The United States has recently tabled a new draft START treaty. Both sides have made new proposals on space-defence which were discussed between Mr. Shultz and Mr. Shevardnadze in Moscow in April.

Argentina

28. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent contacts Her Majesty's Government has had with the Argentine Government, directly or through intermediaries.

Mr. Eggar: Following my right hon. and learned Friend's statement on 29 October 1986, we have been exchanging with the Argentine Government, via the United States Government, some informal ideas relating exclusively to the co-ordination of fisheries management in the south-west Atlantic in the interests of conservation and avoidance of incidents.

EC (Finance)

31. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the future financing of the European Economic Community.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the statement given today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

South Africa

30. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with South Africa.

59. **Mr. Michael** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will assess Her Majesty's Government's policy towards relations with the Government in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Our relations with South Africa remain overshadowed by the issue of apartheid. We continue to seek an early end to this totally unacceptable system and its peaceful replacement by a non-racial, representative system of government.

40. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will review the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the Government of South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Our policy towards South Africa remains unchanged. We seek an early end to the

unacceptable system of apartheid and its peaceful replacement by a non-racial, representative system of government.

62. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made regarding detentions of trade unionists in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We have continued to make known to the South African Government our concern about detentions without charge, most recently on 28 May. On 19 December 1986 Her Majesty's ambassador in Pretoria raised the individual cases of nine trades unionists.

Cyprus

33. **Mr. Berdie Grant** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to bring about the peaceful reunification of Cyprus.

Mrs. Chalker: We believe that the United Nations Secretary-General is best placed to achieve a peaceful, just and lasting settlement in Cyprus. His mission of good offices is supported by all parties to the dispute. We actively support his initiative. He has publicly declared the role we have played.

Central America (Costa Rica Proposals)

34. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have given to Dr. Arias of Costa Rica's peace proposals for the conflict in central America.

55. **Mr. Galbraith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with President Arias of Costa Rica about the situation in central America.

Mr. Eggar: We welcomed this effort by President Arias to reactivate the Contadora peace process and strengthen democracy.

Chile

35. **Mr. McAllion** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on Chileans formerly resident in the United Kingdom who are currently detained without trial in Chile.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's embassy in Santiago is aware of one such case. I am writing to the hon. Member with details.

42. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the ambassador of Chile; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Eggar: The last substantive meeting was on 18 February when the ambassador accompanied Chilean special envoy Ambassador Daza at his call on my right hon. and learned Friend. The discussion was specifically about human rights in Chile.

57. **Mr. Galloway** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken in response to the recent spate of killings in Chile attributed to Government forces.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has asked our ambassador in Santiago to seek further information

on the recent shootings there. We shall be monitoring developments closely. We deplore violence from whatever source.

Middle East

20. **Mr. Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on arms sales to the middle east.

Mr. Mellor: As with our arms sales policy to other parts of the world, all arms sales to the middle east are considered individually on their merits. Each transaction is subject to strict export licencing procedures. Full account is taken of the foreign policy implications of such a sale, the regional and local tensions, and the human rights record of the country involved. We do not allow the export of arms which are likely to be used for internal repression or to violate human rights.

41. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government policy with regard to the middle east.

Mr. Mellor: We remain committed to the search for a just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab/Israel dispute, based on the right of Israel to secure existence and the right of the Palestinians to self-determination. We believe that an international conference remains the most practical way forward.

49. **Mr. Robert Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends taking any initiatives in conjunction with the United Kingdom's European Economic Community partners to try to resolve questions relating to the Palestinians; and if he will make a statement.

67. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he intends taking to pursue the decision of European Economic Community Ministers to convene an international peace conference on the middle east.

Mr. Mellor: As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said on 26 June, we and our European partners firmly support the principle of an international conference. This remains in our view the most practical way forward to negotiations between the parties that are directly concerned. We remain in close touch with the parties and will continue to encourage them to agree arrangements for a conference.

Iran

37. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British relations with Iran.

50. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Iran.

Mr. Mellor: The recent deterioration in relations with Iran was not of the United Kingdom's making.

Our position is that Iran must understand that any constructive dialogue with us can only prosper on a basis

of reciprocity and provided the British diplomatic presence in Tehran is allowed to do its job without hindrance and with its safety assured.

The hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend will know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs set out our position more fully in his speech to the House on 26 June.

Arms Exports

36. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his Department's responsibilities in relation to the control of arms exports as they affect Her Majesty's Government's foreign policy.

Mr. Mellor: The export of arms is controlled by the Export of Goods (Control) Order which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. However, my Department is consulted over all export licence applications so that the foreign policy aspects of arms sales can be fully considered. In deciding whether to approve individual export licence applications my Department pays particular attention to those exports which might exacerbate regional or local tension or contribute to violations of human rights.

As the hon. Member knows, special rules are announced from time to time in relation to certain countries.

Fiji

Mr. Vaz asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relationship with the current administration in Fiji.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I expressed our deep concern about the military coup in Fiji on 14 May, calling for a return to parliamentary democracy. The Governor-General has assumed sole executive authority in Fiji. We have maintained normal contact with him through our high commissioner in Suva. Our normal commercial and trading relations continue as does our aid programme.

US Congressional Hearings

27. **Mr. Darling** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any of the staff of the British embassy in Washington are attending the congressional hearings on the Iran-Contra affair; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No staff are attending on a regular basis.

Korea

46. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Korean Government concerning democracy and human rights.

63. **Mr. Wall** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of the Republic of South Korea regarding recent human rights violations.

Mr. Eggar: We have been following closely developments in the Republic of Korea and hope that the dialogue

between the parties can be constructively resumed. The Korean Government are aware of the importance we attach to human rights and democracy.

EC Research Programme

47. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Kingdom will remove its objection to the European Community 1987-91 framework research programme.

Mrs. Chalker: We are considering whether or not the conditions can be met for such an agreement.

Foreign Minister's Council

48. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Economic Community Foreign Ministers Council meeting on 29 June.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement given today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Soviet Union

51. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet his counterpart from the USSR to discuss Anglo-Soviet relations.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Shevardnadze has invited my right hon. and learned Friend to visit the Soviet Union. He hopes to take up the invitation later this year when, of course, Anglo-Soviet relations would be discussed. He may also meet Mr. Shevardnadze at the United Nations General Assembly in New York in the autumn.

Southern Africa

38. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the objectives of Her Majesty's Government's policy towards southern Africa.

45. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards southern Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Our policy towards Southern Africa was set out in the most Gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament and elaborated in my right hon. and learned Friend's speech in the foreign affairs debate on 26 June.

UNESCO

54. **Mr. William Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about British representation at UNESCO.

Mr. Eggar: Our observer section in Paris continues to monitor developments. There is as yet no clear indication of the fundamental and far-reaching reforms which are necessary if UNESCO is to work effectively in the spirit which inspired its foundation.

Venice Summit

56. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Venice summit.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I accompanied my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the economic summit held in Venice from 8 to 10 June. Copies of the statements issued at the summit have been placed in the Library of the House.

This was the ninth summit I have attended, and was a very businesslike and successful meeting. It dealt with seven principal issues: economic policy, trade and protectionism, agriculture, developing countries and debt, East-West relations, terrorism and Iran-Iraq.

On economic policy, we acknowledged the positive developments over the past year. Growth has continued into its fifth year, inflation continues to fall, interest rates are generally declining, and exchange rates have reached more appropriate levels. But we recognised that the world economy still faced a number of challenges: large external imbalances, continued high unemployment, large public sector deficits, and interest rates that are still too high in real terms. We welcomed the clear undertakings by both surplus and deficit countries to reduce imbalances and the agreement recorded in the economic declaration on strengthened arrangements for multilateral surveillance and greater co-ordination of our economic policies to strengthen the world economy. We also agreed to continue to co-operate closely to foster stability of exchange rates.

We noted with concern rising protectionist pressures, and reaffirmed our commitment to maintaining and strengthening the multilateral open trading system through the Uruguay round of the GATT. We agreed to table a wide range of substantive proposals in Geneva over the coming months. Progress in the Uruguay round will be kept under close political review. We regarded a strong credible GATT as essential to the well-being of all trading nations, and the best defence against mounting protectionist pressures.

Building on the agreements reached at Tokyo last year and in particular at the OECD ministerial in May, we gave a clear commitment to work together to adjust agricultural policies in the light of world demand, both at home and through comprehensive negotiations in the Uruguay round. We also agreed to refrain in the meantime from actions which would worsen the negotiating climate and damage trade relations.

The amount of time that we devoted to discussing the problems of developing countries, in particular debt, reflects the importance that we and all summit countries attach to the economic progress and stability of those countries. While underlining the continuing appropriateness of the case by case strategy, with its central roles for the IMF and World Bank, we recognised that the problems of sub-Saharan Africa were unique and deserved special treatment. The Chancellor's initiative for granting debt relief to those of the poorest developing countries undertaking adjustment efforts was given broad support, and we welcomed the proposal by the managing director of the IMF to increase substantially the resources of the structural adjustment facility, which lends on very concessional terms to the poorest countries.

Statements were made on various political issues.

On East-West relations, we reaffirmed our commitment to peace and security at lower levels of arms, noting with

satisfaction that the dialogue on arms control had intensified. We sought to encourage political solutions to regional conflicts, to secure improvements in human rights and to build confidence and trust between governments and peoples.

Building on the initiative we launched at Bonn in 1985, we issued a strong statement on terrorism, reiterating our belief that, whatever its motives, it had no justification. We welcomed the progress made in international co-operation against terrorism, and in particular the initiative taken by France and Germany to convene a ministerial meeting earlier this year.

We also urged the earliest possible negotiated end to the war between Iran and Iraq, both of whom have suffered grievously from this long and tragic conflict.

I should like to pay a warm tribute to the skilful and effective chairmanship of the Italian President of the Council of Ministers, Signor Fanfani, and to the Italian Government for their excellent arrangements.

The United Kingdom played its full part in achieving a successful summit which has further strengthened our countries' determination to work closely together for the common good.

African National Congress

60. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what dialogue he has established with black South African politicians and spokesmen other than representatives of the African National Congress.

Mrs. Chalker: We maintain contact with a wide cross section of black South African opinion.

Israel

29. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with relations between the United Kingdom and Israel.

Mr. Mellor: Yes.

44. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the recent visit to London by the Foreign Minister of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres.

52. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent meeting with the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and Learned Friend had useful discussions with Mr. Peres about keeping up the momentum towards peace, including the prospects for an international conference.

BBC External Services

64. **Mr. Doran** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will increase the grant to the British Broadcasting Corporation external services to enable the BBC to restart a regular service for the Caribbean; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: British Broadcasting Corporation external service programmes are widely rebroadcast by local radio stations in the Caribbean: priorities for external broadcasting by the BBC are reviewed regularly.

NATO (Arms Control)

66. **Mr. Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the recent meeting of the North Atlantic Council took to reinforce North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's united position on arms control negotiations.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I told the House on 26 June, the conclusions reached at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Reykjavik were a notable fulfilment of our efforts to promote a real improvement in East-West relations. The United Kingdom was one of the main architects of the agreement reached at Reykjavik on the double zero option on intermediate nuclear forces. We have also played a central role in preparations within the Alliance for negotiations on achieving a better conventional balance. The Reykjavik communiqué confirmed the Alliance's arms control policies that were set out last December. A copy of the communiqué has been placed in the Library of the House.

Grenada

68. **Mr. Graham Allan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Grenada.

Mr. Eggar: We enjoy close and friendly relations with Grenada.

United States (Court Judgment)

69. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States of America about the implications for the prospect of a settlement in central America of its non-compliance with the judgments given on 27 June 1986 in the International Court of Justice on complaints brought by Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: We regularly discuss important issues, including the situation in Central America, with the United States Administration and they are well aware of our views.

Saudi Arabia

70. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to visit Saudi Arabia which he last visited in January 1986. Since then he has twice met the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister, most recently when he accompanied King Fahd to Britain on the occasion of the state visit. There are regular exchanges of high level visitors between the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia, which reflects the excellent state of our relations. I am myself hoping to visit Saudi Arabia later this year.

Falkland Islands

71. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to pay an official visit to the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no current plans to visit the Falkland Islands.

Malta

72. **Mr. Mills** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Malta.

Mrs. Chalker: Relations are excellent. Following Dr. Fenech Adami's Nationalist party victory at the 9 May elections, we look forward to a further strengthening of the traditional friendship that exists between our two countries.

USA

73. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to pay an official visit to the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no firm plans at this stage, but would expect to visit the United States of America in due course as part of his regular series of meetings with Mr. Shultz.

Cultural Relations

74. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on cultural relations with other countries.

Mr. Eggar: Cultural diplomacy is a valuable part of our continuing promotion of British interests and values worldwide: our policy was set out in some detail in a memorandum to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

European Community

75. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet other European Economic Community Ministers regarding the future of the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall meet other EC Foreign Ministers at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 20-21 July.

London-Frankfurt Bus Service

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has received to the reference by Her Majesty's Government to the Commission under article 14 of regulation EC 517/72 of the refusal by the German Government to authorise a British bus company to run a scheduled service between London and Frankfurt; when the reference was made; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We referred this case to the Commission for a decision, as provided for under article 14 of regulation EC 517/72, on 4 May. I raised it with Mr. Clinton Davis, the Commissioner responsible, on 23 June and stressed the need for an early resolution. The Commission has now convened a meeting of representatives of the three Governments concerned — Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom — to consider the issues involved.

Bermuda

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between Her Majesty's Government and Bermuda.

Mr. Eggar: Relations are excellent.

Mr. Terry Waite

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the position of Mr. Terry Waite.

Mr. Mellor: Although there have been many conflicting rumours about Terry Waite's whereabouts since his disappearance on 20 January, we still have no firm leads or hard information.

We are doing all we reasonably can to try to discover his whereabouts, as well as the fate of other British citizens held in Lebanon.

DEFENCE

Exercise Purple Warrior

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what will be the dates of Exercise Purple Warrior; what is the purpose of Exercise Purple Warrior; and which units of Her Majesty's armed forces will be taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior;

(2) whether Exercise Purple Warrior will involve units of the Territorial Army and the Home Defence Force;

(3) whether the use of ground defence areas will be simulated during Exercise Purple Warrior;

(4) whether Exercise Purple Warrior is a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation exercise; and if he will make a statement;

(5) whether any local authorities or civil organisations will be participating in Exercise Purple Warrior;

(6) whether the scenario for Exercise Purple Warrior will be made public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Exercise Purple Warrior is a national, tri-Service exercise planned to take place in south-west Scotland between 4 and 19 November. Although, for reasons of economy, the exercise will be held in the United Kingdom, it is not a home defence exercise and so will not involve forces in that role nor units of the Territorial Army nor will it simulate the use of ground defence areas. Local authorities and other civil organisations will not be taking part in it.

The aim of the exercise will be to develop our concept for joint operations outside the NATO area to protect British interests. Details of the scenario remain classified but the exercise will involve the amphibious landing in Western Galloway, Arran and Kintyre of 3 Commando Brigade and 5 Airborne Brigade, to be supported by an airborne assault by a Parachute Battalion Group. Some 39 vessels led by HMS Ark Royal and HMS Illustrious and approximately 30 RAF aircraft will be taking part. Altogether some 20,000 men will be involved in the exercise, of which some 10,000 will take part ashore.

Every effort will be made to minimise any inconvenience to the public and to the environment and full consultations have been held with the regional and district councils for the area, the local police forces and with

national governmental and environmental bodies, including the Nature Conservancy Council and the Forestry Commission. Private landowners and local community, environmental and fishing groups are also being consulted closely.

Exercise Purple Warrior will be an observable exercise under the Stockholm agreement: invitations to send observers will be issued to all states participating in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

Cruise Dispersal Exercises

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects cruise dispersal exercises to begin at Molesworth; and whether he will consider halting them whilst the INF talks are going on.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not the practice to give details of training exercises conducted by nuclear missile units.

We have no plans at present to alter existing arrangements relating to the deployment of cruise missiles in the United Kingdom. The NATO countries concerned, including the United Kingdom, have made it clear that in the absence of a concrete INF arms control agreement with the Soviet Union, they will continue the deployment of LRINF missiles as scheduled. It is NATO's firm determination over the deployment of cruise and Pershing which has brought the INF talks to their present hopeful stage.

Thorn-EMI Factory, Bulwell

Mr. Allen asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the reasons for and the effects upon the United Kingdom's defence of the closure of the Thorn-EMI factory in Bulwell, Nottingham, a principal supplier of nerve gas detection equipment to his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: I will answer shortly.

Trident

Mr. Allen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what costs, at 1987 prices, would be incurred at each stage, if the United Kingdom withdrew from its contractual commitments with the United States of America on (a) the Trident submarines and (b) the nuclear weaponry to be carried by Trident.

Mr. Sainsbury: Her Majesty's Government remain firmly committed to the United Kingdom Trident project, and have no plans to withdraw from any of their related contractual commitments, either in the United States of America or elsewhere.

Mr. Allen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimated cost, at 1987 prices, of the Trident programme; and how this compares with the first estimate given to the House.

Mr. Sainsbury: As announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 27 January this year, the current estimate for Trident is £9.265 million, at 1986-87 prices and £= \$1.50. This represents a real reduction of some £738 million compared with the original 1982 estimate, over and above the savings resulting from the decision to process missiles in the United States.

Mr. Allen asked the Secretary of State for Defence by which date he anticipates the Trident submarine will be armed and on patrol.

Mr. Sainsbury: As has been stated on a number of occasions previously, Trident is planned to enter service in the mid-1990s.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Elderly Persons (Mortality Statistics)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the total number of deaths among those aged (a) 60 to 69 years, (b) 70 to 79 years and (c) 80 years and over for each complete six-month period from 1 April 1977 to 31 March 1987, for England and Wales.

Mrs. Currie: The available information is shown in the table.

Data for the period 1 January to 31 March 1987 have not yet been processed.

Number of deaths registered in six month periods from 1 April 1977, persons aged 60-69, 70-79 and 80 and over years, England and Wales

Period	Age-group in years		
	60-69	70-79	80 and over
1 April 1977—30 September 1977	56,243	87,194	83,608
1 October 1977—31 March 1978	62,822	101,675	100,466
1 April 1978—30 September 1978	54,448	87,894	82,065
1 October 1978—31 March 1979	61,382	104,655	103,526
1 April 1979—30 September 1979	52,658	88,841	83,997
1 October 1979—31 March 1980	58,348	101,304	100,062
1 April 1980—30 September 1980	52,526	88,774	85,433
1 October 1980—31 March 1981	57,706	101,403	104,203
1 April 1981—30 September 1981	51,003	87,722	86,298
1 October 1981—31 March 1982	57,808	104,422	110,338
1 April 1982—30 September 1982	51,151	88,023	88,605
1 October 1982—31 March 1983	57,482	103,202	110,941
1 April 1983—30 September 1983	50,765	88,331	90,264
1 October 1983—31 March 1984	54,512	98,956	106,859
1 April 1984—30 September 1984	49,190	87,007	91,720
1 October 1984—31 March 1985	55,657	102,670	117,664
1 April 1985—30 September 1985	48,927	88,249	96,511
1 October 1985—31 March 1986	54,149	102,276	121,568
1 April 1986—30 September 1986	49,216	87,831	96,419
1 October 1986—31 March 1987	not available		

Trade Unions (Nursing Homes)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nursing homes in England and Wales are owned or managed by trade unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress; how many beds are contained in them; and how many patients received treatment in them in the last year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: Registration and inspection of nursing homes and hospitals in the independent sector is statutorily delegated to district health authorities. I regret that this information is not collected centrally.

Immunisation Programme

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the provision by nurses of pre-school immunisation services.

Mrs. Currie: Vaccines can be administered by a nurse on the direction of a doctor if the nurse is authorised to do so by her employing authority. Local policy on this matter is for health authorities to determine.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards pre-school immunisation programmes in the light of the survey of pre-school immunisation programmes in England and Wales carried out by the public health laboratory service communicable disease surveillance centre on behalf of the disabilities study unit, a copy of which has been forwarded to him.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has just received a copy, which will be studied with care. We understand a summary was submitted to the last meeting of the joint committee on vaccination and immunisation, which advises Ministers on immunisation matters.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that all district health authorities should appoint a single person with direct responsibility for the immunisation programme.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities were asked to do this in a circular (HN(85)19/HN(FP)(85)21) sent in August 1985 and reminded about the need to do so in a CMO/CNO letter (CMO(86)13/CNO(86)12) last year. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to establish a formal training programme for immunisation in every district to target all service providers, including general practitioners.

Mrs. Currie: Effective training of relevant National Health Service staff and general practitioners in immunisation is clearly very important. Central Government, health authorities, the health professions and the training bodies all have a part to play.

Handicapped Children (Calderdale)

Mrs. Mahon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why vital treatment for children living in Calderdale, suffering from cerebral palsy and other handicaps, has been cut.

Mrs. Currie: We understand that because of recruitment difficulties, in particular several vacancies occurring at the same time, and the planned absence of a member of staff on a training course, Calderdale health authority has recently been unable to offer its usual community physiotherapy service to children with physical disabilities. We are assured, however, that the health authority believes the problem to be a temporary one and is confident that the situation will shortly improve. Meanwhile, steps have been taken to provide the service in alternative ways to suit the patients and their families.

If the hon. Member would like to contact the chairman of Calderdale health authority, I am sure he would be happy to discuss with her the action being taken to overcome the current problems.

Conductive Education

Mrs. Mañon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to introduce conductive education, similar to that available in Hungary, for all children who need it.

Mrs. Currie: It has not been clearly established that the system of conductive education practised at the Peto institute in Hungary would be appropriate in the United Kingdom. However, the Government are aware of the current interest in conductive education in this country, and the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Education and Science are jointly funding a survey by the Spastics Society into the extent to which some aspects of the system are being used in the United Kingdom. An application has been received from Birmingham university for assistance towards the cost of a four-year evaluation of the conductive education project being established in Birmingham by the National Foundation for Conductive Education, and this is being considered by both Departments.

Human Embryo Experiments (Legislation)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to introduce the promised legislation on human embryo experimentation.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 30 June, at columns 80-81.

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of abortions which have so far been performed under the Abortion Act 1967; if he will indicate the total number of abortions performed under this Act in emergency to save the life of the mother; and if he will express the latter figure as a percentage of the former.

Mr. Newton: The total number of notifications of abortions to resident and non-resident women, carried out under the Abortion Act 1967, from 27 April 1968 to 31 December 1986 in England and Wales is 2,632,414. Of these, 123 were performed in emergency in order to save the life of the pregnant woman, which represents 0.005 per cent. of all abortions.

Provisional figures for abortions in the March quarter 1987 are due to be published in September 1987.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Allen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present value in real terms of the first £10 Christmas bonus to pensioners paid in 1972.

Mr. Portillo: £44.29 at December 1986 prices.

Community Charge

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies have been undertaken in his Department regarding the effect of the proposed community charge on those with low incomes.

Mr. Scott: Illustrations of the relationship of the community charge to different household income bands

were provided in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714). Officials from this Department assisted in the preparation of those illustrations.

Income Support Scheme

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to lay regulations for the 1988 income support scheme.

Mr. Scott: The regulations to implement the income support scheme next April will be laid before Parliament when final decisions have been taken on the benefit rates in the autumn.

I am today placing in the Library copies of two sets of draft regulations; the Income Support (General) Regulations, and the Income Support (Transitional) Regulations. These set out the rules the Government intend will operate from next April. They are being made available in draft to assist preparations for the implementation of income support.

The draft Income Support (General) Regulations set out the intended rules on conditions of entitlement, treatment of resources and the structure of applicable amounts of benefit payable to particular groups of claimants. They replace four complete sets of regulations and parts of others in the current supplementary benefit scheme. The rates of benefit included in the draft regulations are illustrative only. They are mainly those used in the technical annex to the White paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) published in December 1985. The illustrative rates do not take account of the Government's decision to compensate claimants for the average value of the minimum contribution to domestic rates they will be expected to meet from April 1988. This will be included in the final rates.

Consistent with the objective of a common approach to the income-related benefits, many of the provisions mirror those in the draft Housing Benefit Regulations issued to local authorities in May and also placed in the Library. Discussions have continued with the disability organisations on detailed aspects of the treatment of disabled people.

The draft Income Support (Transitional) Regulations provide for the changeover to the new scheme. As well as a number of mainly technical administrative matters, they provide transitional protection for claimants continuing to satisfy the conditions of entitlement who would otherwise face a reduction in support at the time of change. Normally, this will be based on a comparison between their benefit income in the week before the change (enhanced for householders by the average value of the domestic rates contribution) and their benefit entitlement after the change. Claimants without a permanent address will transfer immediately to the appropriate age-related personal allowance. There will be further transitional protection for claimants receiving large amounts by way of the domestic assistance addition. The benefit of recipients of housing benefit supplement will be reassessed in the same way as other standard housing benefit cases.

These two draft sets of regulations will be complemented by further regulations covering claims and payments for social security benefit generally. These regulations will contain changes in the way that benefit is paid to income support recipients. From April, claimants under pension-

age will normally be paid for the same period in arrears as applies in the national insurance benefits that income support will supplement or replace. Arrangements in the transitional regulations will ensure that existing claimants will continue to receive benefit without any change in the intervals between payments.

Family Credit Scheme

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to lay regulations for the 1988 family credit scheme.

Mr. Scott: The regulations to implement the family credit scheme next April will be laid before Parliament when final decisions have been taken on the relevant rates in the autumn.

I am today placing in the Library copies of two sets of draft regulations: the Family Credit (General) Regulations and the Family Credit (Transitional) Regulations. These set out the rules the Government intend will operate from next April. They are being made available in draft to assist preparations for the implementation of family credit.

The draft Family Credit (General) Regulations set out the intended detailed rules on the qualifying conditions, the treatment of resources, and the relevant amounts, etc. to be used in the calculation of entitlement to family credit. The amounts shown are illustrative only: they are those used in the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) published in December 1985. The final amounts will not be decided until the autumn when the general uprating of social security benefit is announced. Consistent with the objective of a common approach in the new income-related benefits, many of the provisions mirror those in the draft Income Support (General) Regulations, and in the Housing Benefit Regulations issued to local authorities in May, both of which have also been placed in the Library.

The draft Family Credit (Transitional) Regulations provide for the changeover from family income supplement to the new scheme. They provide for existing FIS recipients who are not excluded under the new capital rules to receive family credit, calculated on the earnings and other circumstances at the time of the claim for FIS, and for the award to last for the remainder of the period for which FIS would have been payable but for the introduction of the new scheme, that is up to 51 weeks. They also provide transitional protection for such claimants in the event that the amount of their family credit entitlement is less than the total of the FIS they were receiving before the changeover, plus an additional amount for each child reflecting the fact that FIS families were also entitled to free school meals and free welfare milk.

These draft Family Credit Regulations will be complemented in due course by regulations covering the rules on claims and payments for social security benefits generally. These regulations will provide that in two-parent families family credit should normally be claimed by, and paid to, the mother. It is also intended to provide that, in line with income support, family credit will be paid weekly in arrears. The transitional regulations will provide that there will be no break in weekly payments for existing recipients of FIS in the transition to family credit.

Disabled Drivers (Cash Allowances)

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to encourage disabled drivers of cars and three-wheelers loaned under Departmental vehicle schemes to switch to one of the cash allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I am anxious that disabled drivers who still have departmental vehicles should appreciate the advantages of choice and ownership they would enjoy if they switched to one of the cash mobility allowances and used it to obtain a car. I am grateful to the disabled drivers' organisations which have expressed willingness to give independent advice to those considering making this switch.

Drivers transferring to the mobility allowance or the war pensioners' mobility supplement are able to use it to obtain cars privately or through Motability. Drivers of invalid three-wheelers who wish to buy departmental cars will be able to do so if surplus cars are available. War pensioner drivers of Departmental cars have been able to buy them for a lump sum at preferential prices since November 1983, and I now intend to extend this arrangement to civilian drivers of departmental vehicles. To encourage the remaining drivers in both groups to switch to the appropriate allowance a scheme of extended payments is to be introduced. A purchaser of a departmental car will be able to buy it by foregoing all or part of the allowance until it is paid for.

The Department will meet certain costs in connection with the adaptation of cars for civilian drivers of Departmental vehicles who switch to the mobility allowance on or after 1 July 1987 and obtain a car through Motability. This parallels provisions which already apply to war pensioners.

Any drivers who switch to the mobility allowance and then find they are unable to pass a driving test will be able to revert to a three-wheeler. Repairs of remaining three wheelers will be arranged through the Disablement Service Authority, acting as the agent of DHSS.

No replacement cars will be supplied to civilian drivers after March 1989, thus bringing them into line with war pensioners, whose loan cars have not been replaced since 1983.

Ambulance Service (London)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement concerning the recent disruption to emergency ambulance services in east London and the reasons for reductions in non-emergency ambulance services in the Greater London area.

Mrs. Currie [pursuant to her reply, 30 June 1987, c. 76]: We are not aware of any disruption to emergency ambulance services in east London. We also understand that the London Ambulance Service is meeting all non-emergency ambulance demands that it receives.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

EC Payments

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek clarification from the European Economic Community Commission on whether the 19 million lire paid by the Italian authorities to

organisations linked to the Mafia organisation, for the alleged delivery of non-existent fruit juice to bodies including North Atlantic Treaty Organisation headquarters in Sicily, qualified for reimbursement by the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the additional sums which will be spent by his Department in the current year in making payment for, or advancing money subject to payment in the future by the European Economic Community, for policies previously funded directly by the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission has estimated that the 1987 budget for the EAGGF guarantee section falls short of requirements by some 4.1 billion ecu (£2.9 billion). No decision has yet been taken on how the budget shortfall should be dealt with. If it were decided that guarantee payments should be funded nationally once the budget was exhausted, additional provision would be needed for the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce to make up the shortfall in EC receipts. The amount concerned cannot be estimated with any accuracy at this stage.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the various amounts of particular foodstuffs held in private and public intervention stocks within the European Economic Community; and if he will also publish the comparable totals for each commodity at the same time in each of the previous five years.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

EC (Food and Wine Exports)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the amount of food and wine exported by the European Economic Community to the Soviet Union and East Europe, respectively, in the most recent annual period for which figures are available.

Mr. MacGregor: The information relating to 1986 is set out in the table.

European Community exports to the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc 1986

'000 tonnes

	To Soviet Union	To eastern bloc ¹
Wheat	4,990	623
Barley	1,510	811
Wheat flour	2...	8
Rice	2...	7
Malt	0	2...
Whole milk powder	10	5
Skimmed milk powder	0	1
Condensed milk	2...	2...
Butter (including butteroil)	105	18
Beef and veal	141	70
Pigmeat	2...	1
Poultrymeat	23	2...
Raw sugar (converted to white equivalent)	7	2...
Refined sugar	2...	2...
Olive oil	12	2...
Wine	4	130

¹ German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania.

² Denotes trade under 500 tonnes.

Source: EUROSTAT.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the estimated spending on the common agricultural policy in 1987 and in each of the previous four years.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is as follows:

Year	CAP expenditure (mecu)
1983	16,637
1984	19,093
1985	20,549
1986	23,104
¹ 1987	24,174

¹ Budget provision.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 2 July 1987

TRANSPORT

Manchester Airport (Railway Extension)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans there are for the southern link railway extension to Manchester airport.

Mr. David Mitchell: The local authorities and British Rail have made proposals for an electrified single track spur from the styal line to the airport. I am currently considering an application for grant towards its cost.

BR (Inter-City Services)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Transport if British Rail has any plans to reduce the inter city services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am not aware of any plans for alterations to Inter-City services apart from normal adjustments to meet changed demand.

Needles Lighthouse

Mr. Barry Field asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consult inshore fishermen and yachting interests before reaching a decision on the recommendation of the report to the Lights Advisory Committee to make the Needles lighthouse redundant.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Lights Advisory Committee has proposed that there should be a review of the traditional navigational aids provided by the lighthouse authorities, with a view to reducing numbers and saving costs. In support of this proposal it has submitted to my noble Friend the Minister with responsibility for aviation and shipping a report which contains an illustrative list of aids which it is suggested are not needed by commercial ships carrying electronic navigation equipment. The Needles lighthouse is included in that list. The lighthouse is the responsibility of Trinity House, as lighthouse authority for England and Wales, and any question of its closure would be a matter for it. Representatives of the users are always consulted by the lighthouse authority if the withdrawal of a navigational aid is being contemplated.

Merchant Shipping (Defence Role)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the last 10 years the number of merchant ships that were available from the merchant navy for use in the event of a war; and what is the number of such ships that are expected to be available in each of the next five years.

Mr. David Mitchell: The number of ships of 500 GRT or over in the United Kingdom registered merchant fleet including the Isle of Man and Channel islands, was as follows:

End Year	Number of ships
1977	1,545
1978	1,421
1979	1,305
1980	1,275
1981	1,118
1982	985
1983	866
1984	777
1985	693
1986	546

These ships would have been available for use in the event of war. They would have been supplemented by ships registered in the dependent territories, those made available through the operation of the NATO pool, and other ships open to charter.

The Government do not make forecasts of the size of the merchant fleet, but availability of shipping for defence purposes is closely monitored and a number of initiatives are being taken to help to ensure the future adequacy of these resources.

EC (Air Fares)

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the European Community Council of Transport Ministers on 30 June failed to agree an aviation package.

Mr. Channon: When the Transport Council met on 30 June it was not able to adopt a package liberalising air transport in the Community because Spain refused to allow the package to apply to Gibraltar. I was not prepared to compromise Gibraltar's legitimate rights in this way. Despite the fact that every other member state supported the package, the Spanish Government blocked it when they found they could not secure Gibraltar's exclusion.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Voting

Mr. Tom Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the operation of the new statutory arrangements for (a) postal and proxy voting and (b) overseas voting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received a number of suggestions for ways in which the law governing applications for absent votes, and the registration of overseas electors, might be changed.

We are consulting the political parties and electoral registration officers and will review the arrangements in the light of suggestions received.

Hong Kong

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his policy towards seeking assurances on the imposition of the death penalty from the People's Republic of China on behalf of fugitives returned to Hong Kong, on the warrant of the Secretary of State, who may be surrendered to the People's Republic of China on 30 June 1997; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his policy towards seeking assurances on the imposition of the death penalty from the Governor of

Hong Kong on behalf of fugitives returned to Hong Kong on the warrant of the Secretary of State, who may be surrendered to the People's Republic of China on 30 June 1997; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if, in the exercise of his discretion under section 9(4) of the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967, he takes account of the sentencing policies of any state to whom it is likely a fugitive may be surrendered by a requesting state; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Section 9(4) of the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967 provides discretion not to order the surrender of a fugitive accused or convicted of an offence not punishable with the death penalty in Great Britain, if the death penalty could be imposed on that person in the requesting Commonwealth country or dependency. It is the practice in such cases to seek an assurance, before surrendering the fugitive, that the death penalty will not be carried out. In the case of the return of a fugitive to Hong Kong such an assurance would be sought from the Governor. Extradition arrangements after 1997 must be the subject of consultation with the Chinese Government. The United Kingdom has no extradition treaty with China and therefore it is not possible to extradite a fugitive to that country.

Extradition

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the United Kingdom has an extradition treaty with the People's Republic of China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The United Kingdom has no extradition treaty with the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards surrendering fugitives to countries with whom the United Kingdom does not have an extradition treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: There is at present no power to extradite fugitives to foreign countries with which the United Kingdom has no extradition treaty. Clause 11 of the Criminal Justice Bill, recently introduced in another place, would, if enacted, enable the United Kingdom to extradite fugitives in the absence of a treaty, provided that the requesting state established a *prima facie* case against the fugitive.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his policy towards delaying the signing of extradition warrants until relevant applications lying before the European Commission on Human Rights are decided; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his policy towards delaying the signing of extradition warrants where there are allegations of likely ill-treatment in the requesting country, until relevant applications lying before the European Commission on Human Rights are decided; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The United Kingdom accepts the right of individual petition to the Commission, but is under no obligation under the European Convention on Human Rights to defer the surrender of a fugitive pending consideration of a petition. I understand that it is not the practice of the Commission to ask for surrender to be

delayed except where, for example, there are allegations of likely ill-treatment in the requesting state. It is the practice to defer surrender where this is requested by the Commission.

Criminal Records and Car Registration Numbers

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) charges and (b) convictions relating to abuse of (i) criminal records and (ii) car registration numbers there have been in each year since 1983; and if he will give details of such cases.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally.

Motorways (Traffic Offences)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce photographic machines on the M1 for recording vehicles that overtake on the inside or exceed the speed limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The scope for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of road traffic law enforcement through the further use of technology, and any necessary legislative changes, are being considered by the Road Traffic Law Review under the chairmanship of Dr. Peter North. The review's report is expected later this year, and it would be premature to contemplate the introduction of piecemeal change before that report has been received.

Passports

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why unusual delays are being experienced by applicants for United Kingdom passports; what arrangements he is making to overcome these delays; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Continuing heavy demand added to severe disruption to the passport-issuing process by industrial action has led to the delays currently experienced. These vary across the regional offices with current delay times in dealing with non-urgent applications as follows:

	Weeks
London	12
Newport	10
Glasgow	8
Liverpool	6
Peterborough	5

At the small Belfast office, which caters for Northern Ireland residents, the normal turnaround time of one week is being maintained.

Special measures have been taken to help those with an urgent need to travel where applications are locked in the system. These include:

- (1) the recruitment of additional casual staff (for the hardest pressed offices virtually doubling 1986 levels);
- (2) overtime working by non-striking staff;
- (3) giving priority to personal callers with an urgent need to travel;

(4) the grant of short-term extensions to expired passports, free of charge, for personal callers;

(5) issuing emergency travel documents to personal callers whose postal applications cannot readily be traced.

In addition, Governments of countries to which British citizens travel most frequently have been approached and

invited exceptionally to accept travellers using out-of-date passports. To date the following countries have agreed to accept uncanceled United Kingdom passports which expired within the last five years:

United States of America	until 29 September 1987
New Zealand	until 31 August 1987
Hong Kong	until further notice

They have also agreed, exceptionally and for the same periods, to accept travellers using British Visitors Passports. These passports, which are available from the 1,500 main post offices throughout Britain, are of course already accepted by all countries in Western Europe.

Information about these developments is being made available through the travel trade, on Prestel, through the media and through recorded telephone messages at the London passport office.

People whose applications for 10-year passports have been delayed and who have therefore to obtain a BVP from a post office shortly before they are due to travel will be able to obtain a refund of the BVP fee later if the following criteria are met:

(i) the standard passport application must have been properly completed and accompanied by the necessary documents, fee and photographs;

(ii) it must have been lodged in good time and at least four weeks before the stated travel date as requested in passport application forms;

(iii) the application for the British visitor's passport was made not more than a week before the date of travel indicated on the standard passport application.

Inquiries about refunds should be addressed to the passport office which handled the standard passport application and should be accompanied by the British visitor's passport and the number and date of issue of the standard passport or the date on which the application was submitted if the standard passport has still not been received. It is unlikely that passport offices will be able to deal with requests for refunds before the end of September.

In the longer term, arrangements are in hand to disperse work on postal applications now done in London to an enlarged office in Glasgow. This will enable the London passport office to concentrate its attention on applications lodged at the public counter for which the demand is heavy. Computerisation of the entire passport-issuing and record-keeping operation in the United Kingdom is due to begin in 1988 and over the next three years each of the six passport offices will be computerised. By enabling the passport department to give a faster service to all its customers computerisation should help to reduce substantially the problems currently being experienced during periods of peak demand.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Insider Dealing

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he has taken on information so far received from the inspector appointed by him to inquire into insider dealing in the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Maude: Inspectors were appointed last December to investigate possible unlawful insider dealing involving information relating to the exercise of functions under the

Fair Trading Act 1973 of the Secretary of State, the Director General of Fair Trading or the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

My Department is keeping the Director of Public Prosecutions, who would be responsible for any prosecution in this case, informed of its progress, but has not taken any other action on information received from the inspectors.

Yorkshire Woollen Textile Industry

Mr. Cryer asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the number of employees in the Yorkshire woollen textile industry for 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 to the most recent practicable date.

Mr. Atkins [pursuant to his reply, 30 June 1987, c. 58]: Data are not yet available for 1986 and 1987. Employment in Yorkshire for establishments classified to the woollen and worsted industry¹ from 1978 to 1985 is as follows:

Year	Employment (thousands)
1978	54.0
1979	50.4
1980	40.3
1981	33.7
1982	31.7
1983	29.0
1984	28.1
1985	27.9

¹ Minimum List Heading 414 of the Standard Industrial Classification, Revised 1968, for the years 1978 and 1979. Activity heading 4310 of the Standard Industrial Classification, Revised 1980 for later years.

Source: Annual Census of Production.

ENERGY

Magnox Reactors

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will update to 31 March 1967 the information on thermal energy generated and spent fuel discharged by each of the Central Electricity Generating Board magnox reactors given in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 26 June 1986, *Official Report*, column 269;

(2) if he will update to 31 March 1987 the information on thermal energy generated and spent fuel discharged by the Hunterston A station in the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 10 July 1986, *Official Report*, column 238; and if he will revise the figure for fuel discharged in 1985-86 given in that answer;

(3) if he will update to 31 March the information on the allocation of plutonium produced in the Central Electricity Generating Board and South of Scotland Electricity Board magnox reactors given in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 21 July 1986, *Official Report*, columns 10-11.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Nuclear Power Stations (Emergencies)

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when he expects to receive the results of the post-Chernobyl review of emergency plans and procedures for nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the Government's post-Chernobyl review of emergency plans and procedures for nuclear power stations will examine the size of emergency planning and evacuation zones; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 22 April at columns 547-51, by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad). Work on the review is continuing.

EMPLOYMENT

Top-Tier Sites

Mr. Bill Michie asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many large inventory top-tier sites were known to the Health and Safety Executive in (a) December 1986, and (b) December 1987; and for how many of these sites the plans required by CIMAH regulation 11 have been prepared.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available in the form requested. However, at 31 March 1987, the Health and Safety Executive was aware of 210 large inventory top-tier sites and 66 small inventory top-tier sites and plans required by regulation 11 of the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard Regulations 1984 were known to have been prepared for 173 sites. Local authorities are not required to inform the HSE when such plans are completed.

Average Earnings

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the latest average earnings figures for each region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: The latest information relates to April 1986 and is published, for males and females respectively, in tables 9.3 and 9.4 of 1987 "Regional Trends", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Manpower Services Commission Schemes

Mr. Ken Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Employment why the rules of the Manpower Services Commission schemes are not published.

Mr. Lee: The Manpower Services Commission publishes leaflets for all its schemes. These contain information about the scheme and the main eligibility criteria, and advise on where further information may be obtained. Leaflets for schemes which are open to members of the public are freely available at jobcentres and careers offices. Additionally the "Action for Jobs" leaflet which has been issued to just over 6 million people includes a summary of the eligibility conditions which apply to each scheme run by the Department of Employment and the MSC.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Ken Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Employment why people in receipt of housing benefit supplement are not eligible to receive enterprise allowance.

Mr. Cope: The Manpower Services Commission is currently considering whether housing benefit supplement should be treated as a qualifying benefit for the enterprise allowance scheme. I shall write to my hon. Friend when that consideration is complete.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 14 May 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 2,986,453. This was 284,000 lower than a year ago, the largest 12-month fall since similar records began in 1948.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what plans he has to reduce unemployment on (a) Merseyside and (b) Liverpool; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to reduce unemployment in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Government will continue to pursue policies of sound financial management designed further to reduce inflation and to promote investment, enterprise and increased employment in Liverpool, Merseyside and throughout England and Wales. These policies have so far produced more than one million new jobs since 1983.

Merseyside and Liverpool attract very high levels of Government assistance which helps support and create employment. The whole of Merseyside has development area status, and local authorities in Merseyside also benefit under the urban programme. A city action team and a development corporation operate in the county; and there is an enterprise zone in Speke. Liverpool is an inner city partnership area, and also has a freeport. Unemployment in Merseyside was 128,167 in May 1987 as against 139,502 in May 1986; corresponding figures for Liverpool were 96,974 and 105,684.

My Department and the Manpower Services Commission operate over 30 employment, enterprise and training measures described in the "Action for Jobs" booklet, all of which are available in Merseyside and Liverpool.

My Department is also consulting the Manpower Services Commission with a view to providing a comprehensive employment service for unemployed people and there will be a guaranteed place on YTS for every 16 or 17-year-old unemployed school leaver.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the level of unemployment in all constituencies in England and Wales at the latest date.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library:

Constituency	Unemployed claimants 14 May 1987
Luton South	6,306
Mid Bedfordshire	2,556
North Bedfordshire	3,953
North Luton	4,053
South West Bedfordshire	3,383
East Berkshire	2,848

Constituency	Unemployed claimants 14 May 1987	Constituency	Unemployed claimants 14 May 1987
Newbury	1,828	South Thanet	4,262
Reading East	3,206	Tonbridge and Malling	2,339
Reading West	2,786	Tunbridge Wells	1,942
Slough	4,068	Banbury	2,641
Windsor and Maidenhead	2,062	Henley	1,420
Wokingham	1,563	Oxford East	3,267
Aylesbury	2,157	Oxford West and Abingdon	2,205
Beaconsfield	1,468	Wantage	1,575
Buckingham	2,257	Witney	1,889
Chesham and Amersham	1,334	Chertsey and Walton	1,708
Milton Keynes	6,055	East Surrey	1,336
Wycombe	2,477	Epsom and Ewell	1,659
Bexhill and Battle	1,775	Esher	1,171
Brighton Kemptown	4,453	Guildford	1,611
Brighton Pavilion	4,423	Mole Valley	1,240
Eastbourne	3,063	North West Surrey	1,756
Hastings and Rye	4,190	Reigate	1,701
Hove	3,962	South West Surrey	1,343
Lewes	2,191	Spelthorne	1,900
Wealden	1,523	Woking	1,927
Basildon	5,516	Arundel	2,763
Billericay	3,290	Chichester	2,003
Braintree	2,675	Crawley	2,047
Brentwood and Ongar	1,964	Horsham	1,753
Castle Point	2,801	Mid Sussex	1,592
Chelmsford	2,601	Shoreham	2,007
Epping Forest	2,597	Worthing	2,411
Harlow	3,718	Cambridge	3,092
Harwich	4,360	Huntingdon	3,122
North Colchester	3,541	North East Cambridgeshire	4,026
Rochford	2,426	Peterborough	7,290
Saffron Walden	1,923	South East Cambridgeshire	1,648
South Colchester and Maldon	3,686	South West Cambridgeshire	2,151
Southend East	4,070	Great Yarmouth	6,716
Southend West	2,994	Mid Norfolk	2,923
Thurrock	5,170	North Norfolk	3,106
Aldershot	2,440	North West Norfolk	4,428
Basingstoke	2,395	Norwich North	3,599
East Hampshire	2,065	Norwich South	5,596
Eastleigh	3,841	South Norfolk	2,722
Fareham	2,984	South West Norfolk	3,758
Gosport	3,559	Bury St. Edmunds	2,818
Havant	4,795	Central Suffolk	2,804
Isle of Wight	5,901	Ipswich	3,935
New Forest	2,177	South Suffolk	3,059
North West Hampshire	1,882	Suffolk Coastal	2,414
Portsmouth North	4,423	Waveney	5,847
Portsmouth South	7,222	Barking	3,386
Romsey and Waterside	3,081	Battersea	6,101
Southampton Itchen	6,438	Beckenham	2,788
Southampton Test	5,480	Bethnal Green and Stepney	7,779
Winchester	1,917	Bexley Heath	2,166
Broxbourne	2,622	Bow and Poplar	7,769
Hertford and Stortford	1,760	Brent East	6,903
Hertsmere	2,441	Brent North	3,012
North Hertfordshire	2,794	Brent South	6,350
South West Hertfordshire	1,934	Brentford and Isleworth	3,596
St. Albans	2,076	Carshalton and Wallington	2,524
Stevenage	3,476	Chelsea	3,576
Watford	2,874	Chingford	2,454
Welwyn Hatfield	2,467	Chipping Barnet	1,900
West Hertfordshire	2,826	Chislehurst	1,999
Ashford	3,191	Croydon Central	2,991
Canterbury	3,704	Croydon North East	3,454
Dartford	2,959	Croydon North West	3,609
Dover	4,145	Croydon South	1,726
Faversham	4,819	Dagenham	3,585
Folkestone and Hythe	4,267	Dulwich	4,359
Gillingham	4,126	Ealing North	3,586
Gravesham	4,355	Ealing Acton	4,391
Maidstone	2,809	Ealing Southall	5,224
Medway	4,138	Edmonton	3,827
Mid Kent	3,943	Eltham	3,268
North Thanet	4,998	Enfield North	3,360
Sevenoaks	1,937	Enfield Southgate	2,630

Constituency	Unemployed claimants 14 May 1987	Constituency	Unemployed claimants 14 May 1987
Erith and Crayford	3,650	Plymouth Drake	5,738
Feltham and Heston	4,364	Plymouth Sutton	3,568
Finchley	2,632	South Hams	3,622
Fulham	5,010	Teignbridge	3,453
Greenwich	4,426	Tiverton	2,619
Hackney North and Stoke Newington	9,402	Torbay	5,319
Hackney South and Shoreditch	10,365	Torridge and West Devon	3,698
Hammersmith	6,461	Bournemouth East	4,508
Hampstead and Highgate	5,541	Bournemouth West	3,671
Harrow East	3,320	Christchurch	2,013
Harrow West	2,368	North Dorset	2,042
Hayes and Harlington	2,702	Poole	3,534
Hendon North	2,592	South Dorset	3,600
Hendon South	2,562	West Dorset	1,815
Holborn and St. Pancras	8,100	Cheltenham	3,732
Hornchurch	2,513	Cirencester and Tewkesbury	2,467
Hornsey and Wood Green	6,976	Gloucester	4,341
Ilford North	2,625	Stroud	3,091
Ilford South	3,926	West Gloucestershire	4,049
Islington North	9,034	Bridgwater	3,648
Islington South and Finsbury	7,034	Somerton and Frome	2,428
Kensington	4,975	Taunton	3,399
Kingston-upon-Thames	2,174	Wells	2,782
Lewisham East	4,238	Yeovil	2,723
Lewisham West	4,978	Devizes	3,061
Lewisham Deptford	7,730	North Wiltshire	2,948
Leyton	5,151	Salisbury	2,718
Mitcham and Morden	3,513	Swindon	5,833
Newham North East	5,440	Westbury	3,308
Newham North West	5,325	Bromsgrove	3,726
Newham South	5,388	Hereford	3,606
Norwood	7,989	Leominster	2,936
Old Bexley and Sidcup	1,669	Mid Worcestershire	5,288
Orpington	2,070	South Worcestershire	3,133
Peckham	8,647	Worcester	4,206
Putney	3,493	Wyre Forest	4,596
Ravensbourne	1,833	Ludlow	3,263
Richmond-upon-Thames and Barnes	2,188	North Shropshire	3,861
Romford	2,577	Shrewsbury and Atcham	3,628
Ruislip-Northwood	1,381	The Wrekin	8,507
Southwark and Bermondsey	7,043	Burton	4,411
Streatham	6,061	Cannock and Burntwood	4,819
Surbiton	1,328	Mid Staffordshire	3,814
Sutton and Cheam	1,808	Newcastle-under-Lyme	3,772
The City of London and Westminster	4,827	South East Staffordshire	5,395
Tooting	5,181	South Staffordshire	4,788
Tottenham	9,307	Stafford	3,759
Twickenham	2,010	Staffordshire Moorlands	2,939
Upminster	2,590	Stoke-on-Trent Central	5,348
Uxbridge	2,273	Stoke-on-Trent North	5,296
Vauxhall	9,929	Stoke-on-Trent South	4,522
Walthamstow	3,671	North Warwickshire	4,822
Wanstead and Woodford	1,953	Nuneaton	4,599
Westminster North	8,003	Rugby and Kenilworth	3,859
Wimbledon	2,378	Stratford-on-Avon	2,877
Woolwich	5,863	Warwick and Leamington	4,054
Bath	3,220	Aldridge-Brownhills	3,776
Bristol East	4,487	Birmingham Edgbaston	5,090
Bristol North West	4,365	Birmingham Erdington	7,632
Bristol South	6,461	Birmingham Hall Green	5,494
Bristol West	6,033	Birmingham Hodge Hill	7,211
Kingswood	3,471	Birmingham Ladywood	8,973
Northavon	2,987	Birmingham Northfield	7,747
Wansdyke	2,526	Birmingham Perry Barr	7,536
Weston-Super-Mare	3,643	Birmingham Small Heath	9,733
Woodspring	2,410	Birmingham Sparkbrook	8,701
Falmouth and Camborne	5,616	Birmingham Yardley	4,871
North Cornwall	4,732	Birmingham Selly Oak	5,905
South East Cornwall	3,590	Coventry North East	7,964
St. Ives	5,222	Coventry North West	4,623
Truro	4,511	Coventry South East	6,215
Exeter	4,370	Coventry South West	4,139
Honiton	2,669	Dudley East	7,531
North Devon	3,576	Dudley West	5,898
Plymouth Devonport	4,965	Halesowen and Stourbridge	4,534

<i>Constituency</i>	<i>Unemployed claimants 14 May 1987</i>
Meriden	6,641
Solihull	3,191
Sutton Coldfield	3,279
Walsall North	7,347
Walsall South	6,712
Warley East	6,165
Warley West	5,260
West Bromwich East	5,592
West Bromwich West	6,553
Wolverhampton North East	7,912
Wolverhampton South East	6,531
Wolverhampton South West	5,951
Amber Valley	4,010
Bolsover	5,394
Chesterfield	5,665
Erewash	4,688
Derby North	5,002
Derby South	7,508
High Peak	3,574
North East Derbyshire	5,159
South Derbyshire	4,063
West Derbyshire	2,673
Blaby	2,399
Bosworth	3,051
Harborough	2,116
Leicester East	4,953
Leicester South	6,501
Leicester West	6,104
Loughborough	3,007
North West Leicestershire	3,980
Rutland and Melton	2,577
East Lindsey	5,204
Gainsborough and Horncastle	3,885
Grantham	4,129
Holland with Boston	3,579
Lincoln	6,539
Stamford and Spalding	3,001
Corby	4,133
Daventry	2,305
Kettering	2,725
Northampton North	4,226
Northampton South	3,663
Wellingborough	3,325
Ashfield	5,042
Bassetlaw	5,500
Broxtowe	3,606
Gedling	3,724
Mansfield	3,303
Newark	4,173
Nottingham East	9,044
Nottingham North	6,995
Nottingham South	6,126
Rushcliffe	3,329
Sherwood	5,121
Beverley	3,171
Booth Ferry	4,062
Bridlington	4,551
Brigg and Cleethorpes	5,976
Glanford and Scunthorpe	5,903
Great Grimsby	6,937
Kingston-upon-Hull East	7,180
Kingston-upon-Hull North	8,239
Kingston-upon-Hull West	7,345
Harrogate	2,950
Richmond	3,392
Ryedale	2,765
Scarborough	4,626
Selby	3,317
Skipton and Ripon	2,380
York	5,752
Barnsley Central	5,841
Barnsley East	5,456
Barnsley West and Penistone	5,626
Don Valley	7,077
Doncaster Central	7,712

<i>Constituency</i>	<i>Unemployed claimants 14 May 1987</i>
Doncaster North	8,195
Rother Valley	5,719
Rotherham	6,480
Sheffield Central	9,817
Sheffield Attercliffe	5,926
Sheffield Brightside	7,693
Sheffield Hallam	4,483
Sheffield Heeley	7,154
Sheffield Hillsborough	5,615
Wentworth	6,228
Batley and Spen	4,714
Bradford North	7,324
Bradford South	5,700
Bradford West	8,135
Calder Valley	3,840
Colne Valley	3,570
Dewsbury	4,832
Elmet	3,219
Halifax	5,147
Hemsworth	5,442
Huddersfield	5,191
Keighly	3,708
Leeds Central	6,989
Leeds East	6,755
Leeds North East	4,283
Leeds North West	3,643
Leeds West	5,273
Morley and Leeds South	4,178
Normanton	3,560
Pontefract and Castleford	5,879
Pudsey	2,784
Shipley	3,113
Wakefield	4,939
City of Chester	5,200
Congleton	2,624
Crewe and Nantwich	4,451
Eddisbury	4,373
Ellesmere Port and Neston	5,856
Halton	7,091
Macclesfield	2,822
Tatton	3,380
Warrington North	5,981
Warrington South	5,745
Altrincham and Sale	2,748
Ashton-under-Lyne	4,697
Bolton North East	4,963
Bolton South East	6,043
Bolton West	4,551
Bury North	3,922
Bury South	4,081
Cheadle	2,198
Davyhulme	4,146
Denton and Reddish	5,427
Eccles	5,126
Hazel Grove	3,157
Heywood and Middleton	5,382
Leigh	5,608
Littleborough and Saddleworth	3,369
Makerfield	5,889
Manchester Central	10,796
Manchester Blackley	6,477
Manchester Gorton	6,817
Manchester Withington	6,602
Manchester Wythenshawe	6,121
Oldham Central and Royton	5,652
Oldham West	4,206
Rochdale	5,904
Salford East	7,944
Stalybridge and Hyde	5,498
Stockport	4,237
Stretford	8,476
Wigan	6,590
Worsley	5,509
Blackburn	7,090
Blackpool North	5,190

Constituency	Unemployed claimants 14 May 1987
Blackpool South	5,524
Burnley	5,103
Chorley	4,076
Fylde	2,586
Hyndburn	3,372
Lancaster	3,098
Morecambe and Lunesdale	4,150
Pendle	3,763
Preston	6,802
Ribble Valley	1,799
Rossendale and Darwen	3,822
South Ribble	3,741
West Lancashire	6,455
Wyre	3,483
Birkenhead	9,200
Bootle	10,168
Crosby	4,957
Knowsley North	8,824
Knowsley South	9,044
Liverpool Broadgreen	8,206
Liverpool Garston	7,532
Liverpool Mossley Hill	7,150
Liverpool Riverside	10,818
Liverpool Walton	10,498
Liverpool West Derby	8,995
Southport	4,307
St. Helens North	6,253
St. Helens South	7,222
Wallasey	7,235
Wirral South	3,683
Wirral West	4,075
Barrow and Furness	4,126
Carlisle	3,802
Copeland	3,495
Penrith and the Borders	2,851
Westmorland and Lonsdale	1,960
Workington	3,787
Hartlepool	8,504
Langbaurgh	7,233
Middlesbrough	9,884
Redcar	7,957
Stockton North	8,118
Stockton South	7,019
Bishop Auckland	5,999
City of Durham	4,105
Darlington	5,500
Easington	5,841
North Durham	6,137
North West Durham	5,241
Sedgefield	4,647
Berwick-upon-Tweed	3,697
Blyth Valley	4,832
Hexham	2,163
Wansbeck	5,523
Blaydon	4,831
Gateshead East	6,494
Houghton and Washington	7,836
Jarrow	7,279
Newcastle-upon-Tyne Central	5,508
Newcastle-upon-Tyne East	7,145
Newcastle-upon-Tyne North	6,097
South Shields	7,171
Sunderland North	10,397
Sunderland South	8,221
Tyne Bridge	9,009
Tynemouth	6,340
Wallsend	7,845
Alyn and Deeside	3,805
Clwyd North West	5,027
Clwyd South West	3,671
Delyn	4,318
Wrexham	4,431
Carmarthen	3,696
Ceredigion and Pembroke North	3,884
Llanelli	4,319

Constituency	Unemployed claimants 14 May 1987
Pembroke	6,146
Blaenau Gwent	4,953
Islwyn	3,666
Monmouth	2,875
Newport East	4,553
Newport West	5,134
Torfaen	4,903
Caernarfon	3,227
Conwy	3,474
Meirionnydd nant Conwy	1,692
Ynys Mon	4,566
Bridgend	3,381
Caerphilly	5,116
Cynon Valley	4,158
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	4,737
Ogmore	4,316
Pontypridd	4,428
Rhondda	4,801
Brecon and Radnor	2,299
Montgomery	1,921
Cardiff Central	5,786
Cardiff North	2,379
Cardiff South and Penarth	5,078
Cardiff West	5,566
Vale of Glamorgan	4,428
Aberavon	3,791
Gower	3,132
Neath	3,783
Swansea East	4,999
Swansea West	5,340

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest unemployment figures in the regions of England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library.

Region	Unemployed Claimants 14 May 1987
South-East	690,901
(including Greater London)	(368,900)
East Anglia	75,054
South-West	178,582
West Midlands	310,531
East Midlands	187,101
Yorkshire and Humberside	289,786
North-West	407,880
North	216,594
Wales	157,779

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of unemployment in the Liverpool travel-to-work area at the latest date; and what were the figures in June 1979.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 14 May 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the Liverpool travel-to-work area was 96,974. Comparisons with June 1979 are difficult to make because of changes in the coverage of the data. However, in June 1979, the number of unemployed registrants in jobcentre areas closely corresponding to the Liverpool travel-to-work area, as defined in 1978, was 59,399.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest level of youth unemployment in (a) Liverpool and (b) Merseyside.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 9 April 1987, the latest date for which an analysis of

unemployment by age is available, the number of unemployed claimants aged under 18 years in the Liverpool local authority area was 2,130 and in the Merseyside metropolitan area was 5,070.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest level of unemployment on Merseyside at the latest date.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 14 May 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the Merseyside metropolitan area was 128,167.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of youth unemployment in England and Wales at the latest date.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 9 April 1987, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, the number of unemployed claimants aged under 18 years in England was 93,324 and Wales was 6,348.

British Shipbuilders Ltd.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many former employees of British Shipbuilders Ltd. have had their claims for unemployment benefits met in light of the decision made by Mr. M. J. Goodman, social security commissioner, in Southampton on 23 September 1986; and if he will now authorise similar payments to other redundant British Shipbuilders' employees.

Mr. Lee: Some 25,000 claims for arrears of unemployment benefit have been made following the commissioner's decision. These are being examined individually. Many claims have been met, but a precise figure is not available from benefit statistics. The law requires each benefit claim to be determined individually by independent adjudicating authorities who take account of case law laid down in commissioners' decisions. Individual claimants will be informed about the outcome of their claim as soon as possible.

Mrs. Pamela Simmons (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Employment when the hon. Member for Solihull can expect a reply to his letter of 5 May concerning his constituent Mrs. Pamela Simmons.

Mr. Nicholls: I shall be writing to my hon. Friend shortly.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

AIDS

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action his Department is taking to alert young people to the risk of AIDS; and what advice is being given about its avoidance.

Mr. Dunn: In June last year my Department published "Children at school and problems related to AIDS". This booklet addressed primarily the care of HIV infected pupils at school.

To help teachers in introducing AIDS education into their teaching programmes and to help them answer

pupils' questions authoritatively, "AIDS: Some Questions and Answers" containing factual information about AIDS, was published in March. The BBC has been commissioned to produce a video resource package for use in schools with pupils in the 13 to 16 age range. The package will seek to inform pupils of the facts about AIDS and will encourage them to behave responsibly. Pupils will be warned of the risks of casual or promiscuous sexual behaviour, whether heterosexual or homosexual, and of sharing equipment for intravenous drug misuse.

My right hon. Friend will continue to consider ways of supporting and promoting AIDS education.

Veterinary Colleges, Scotland

Mr. Galbraith asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for the future development of the two veterinary colleges in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: There is a recognised need to rationalise provision for veterinary education. The Government welcome the initiative of the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow in discussing arrangements for closer co-operation, and the establishment, announced today, of a UGC working party to begin work in November 1987 under the chairmanship of Sir Ralph Riley FRS. If by then the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow have made significant progress with their plans, the UGC's review will be confined to the four English universities with veterinary schools.

Interim Advisory Committee on Teachers' Pay

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science who has been appointed to the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No appointments have yet been made to the interim advisory committee. We hope shortly to be in a position to announce appointments to the committee.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Magistrates

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Attorney-General what is the number of stipendiary magistrates currently holding office in England and Wales; and if he will identify each petty sessional area served by the same.

The Attorney-General: A stipendiary magistrate is appointed to a commission area and may serve in each petty sessional area within that commission area. In the inner London commission area there are 48 stipendiary magistrates. Outside this area there are 14 stipendiary magistrates in the following commission areas:

West Midlands (3), Greater Manchester (2), Mid-Glamorgan (2), South Yorkshire (2), West Yorkshire (2), Humberside, Merseyside and South Glamorgan (1 each).

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Attorney-General what action he has taken or proposes to take to encourage the increased use of stipendiary magistrates.

The Attorney-General: A consultation paper, issued jointly by the Lord Chancellor's Department and by the Home Office, on the numbers of magistrates allocated to petty sessional areas has been published and comments on

it are presently being considered. The paper, which contains suggested criteria for the appointment of more stipendiary magistrates, has been placed in the Library.

Even in areas where stipendiary magistrates are not currently appointed, they are used to hearing long or complex cases where a request for a stipendiary magistrate has been made by the clerk to the justices.

Scheduled Offences

Rev. Martin Smyth: asked the Attorney-General what representations have been received by him concerning current arrangements for trying scheduled offences in the courts in Northern Ireland; what changes have been called for; and if he will list the individuals and organisations concerned.

Mr. Tom King [pursuant to his reply, 29 June 1987, c. 14.]: The various debates which led up to the enactment of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1987 enabled those right hon. and hon. Members who contributed to raise a very wide range of proposals for changing the arrangements for the trial of scheduled offences in Northern Ireland. Over the years, and particularly during the passage of the Act, a number of bodies and individuals, including the Irish Government, have made many different representations for changing the current arrangements.

It would require disproportionate effort to list all the representations which have been made and the organisations and individuals concerned.

WALES

Lambs and Sheep

33. Mr. Ray Powell asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many lambs and sheep are still under restriction for sale in north Wales as a result of the Chernobyl fall-out.

Mr. Peter Walker: About 200,000 sheep are within the areas subject to movement and slaughter restrictions. However, arrangements for these sheep to be marketed following live monitoring, and where necessary marking to prevent slaughter, are available to affected farmers.

Women's Needs

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the main needs of women in the policy areas within the sphere of his Department's activities; what has been done to identify and quantify these needs and to monitor services delivery; what consultation is carried out with women to ensure their views are adequately represented; and what training is given to his staff to raise their appreciation of the needs of women.

Mr. Peter Walker: The relevant activities in my Department primarily relate to education, employment opportunities, health and social services. The specific needs of women, both as providers and consumers of services, are identified, quantified and monitored on a continuing basis by my Department and bodies with direct responsibilities for services. In particular, emphasis is placed on primary and secondary education in ensuring that boys and girls benefit equally from measures designed to improve the quality and relevance of the school curriculum and to raise standards.

My Department is funding a research project involving the study of girls' knowledge of and attitudes towards training and employment following the Cardiff Women's Training Roadshow. In the further education sector my Department is committed to improving the provision of guidance and information about the increasing range of opportunities available to women, including those in traditionally male-dominated areas such as engineering and technology. In the autumn the introduction of the Open College in Wales, with courses that aim to meet the needs and circumstances of individual students, will be of especial interest to women with domestic responsibilities. More generally the Department seeks to encourage a growing consensus within the Welsh education system on the importance of continuing and adult education, particularly part-time and using modern methods such as distance and open learning, that will benefit women.

In so far as employment is concerned, the main need is to create jobs. Employment measures include the full involvement of girls in training, award and work shadow schemes which are operated to attract young people into industry. A number of MSC initiatives are designed specifically for women. The Development Board for Rural Wales is undertaking courses for women interested in establishing their own businesses. In health, particular attention is being given to improve women's health by enhancing cervical cancer screening facilities, making preparations for the establishment of a national breast cancer screening service, addressing women's needs in the Government's anti-smoking and drug education programme and in implementing recommendations from an expert survey group to stimulate improvements in maternity and neo-natal care. The majority of informal carers are women and my Department has consistently encouraged social services departments and voluntary organisations to develop policies to assist both men and women carers. The particular problems faced by informal carers of mentally handicapped people are recognised by the introduction of the all-Wales mental handicap strategy. Finally, the Department funded a seminar to enable Welsh Women's Aid and the police to consider their roles in matters relating to domestic violence.

My Department collects and analyses a comprehensive range of data which differentiates between men and women across the range of my responsibilities particularly in relation to agriculture, education, health and social services and housing. These data highlight differences which assist in the formulation of policy options.

Consultation on policy developments take place with a large number of bodies and the views of women are reflected in responses. The Minister of State is represented on the inter-departmental ministerial group on women's issues. My Department is seeking to develop improved links with the Wales Assembly of Women. Finally, my Department's staff training programme includes sessions on a range of courses, designed to raise the level of appreciation by staff of the needs of women.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those parts of Wales which are being investigated by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive as possible dumping sites for nuclear waste.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment made clear in his

statement on 1 May, at column 504, NIREX is still some way from identifying suitable locations for a deep multi-purpose facility for the disposal of low and intermediate level waste.

At this stage, it is not possible to rule out any part of the United Kingdom.

PRIME MINISTER

Greenock and Port Glasgow

Q16. **Dr. Godman** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to Greenock and Port Glasgow in the near future.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

"List of Ministerial Responsibilities"

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Prime Minister when an up-to-date version of the document, "List of Ministerial Responsibilities" will be published.

The Prime Minister: The new edition of the "List of Ministerial Responsibilities", which in non-election years would be published at the end of the summer recess, has been brought forward to reflect ministerial appointments following the general election; it will be published tomorrow afternoon.

Auchmithie

Q50. **Mr. Andrew Welsh** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Auchmithie.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Council of Ministers

Q65. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the outcome of the European Economic Community Council of Ministers' meeting held on 29 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made on Wednesday 1 July, at columns 493-501.

Scotland

Q69. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Prime Minister when she next intends to visit Scotland.

The Prime Minister: I make official visits to Scotland from time to time.

Engagements

Mr. Stern asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

Mr. Atkinson asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

St. Helenians (Student Grants)

Dr. Marek asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to treat St. Helenians as United Kingdom nationals with regard to study and grant awards at United Kingdom polytechnics or universities; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Eligibility for student awards depends on residence, not nationality. To qualify for an award students must have been ordinarily resident in the British islands for three years before the start of their course, for purposes other than that of receiving full-time education. The Government also have a number of scholarships, offered through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which are open to students from St. Helena.

Non-Government Organisations (Grants)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will give the total amount of grants made to tax-receiving independent non-government organisations in 1986-87 and the likely amount in 1987-88;

(2) what are the criteria used in awarding grants to tax-receiving independent non-government organisations; and if she is satisfied that the taxpayer gets value for money.

The Prime Minister: I shall reply to my hon. Friend shortly.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. Thomas asked the Prime Minister to which Government Department British Nuclear Fuels plc is responsible for the operational cycle of its reactors at Calder Hall and Chapel Cross for the production of nuclear materials for defence uses.

The Prime Minister: The operation of these reactors is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Afghanistan

22. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what current contacts exist between Her Majesty's Government and the Afghan resistance movement; what use Her Majesty's Government make of these contacts in formulating their policy towards Afghanistan and, in particular, towards the provision of military assistance to the Afghan resistance; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We have regular contacts with leaders of the Afghan resistance movement and take their views into account when formulating our policy on Afghanistan.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what information Her Majesty's Government have about the use of Blowpipe missiles in Afghanistan and as to the sources of supply direct or indirect of those weapons.

The Prime Minister: It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to comment on matters of this kind.

Wales

Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister when she next plans to pay an official visit to Wales.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

ENVIRONMENT

Conservation

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether mention was made in the United Kingdom report to the conference of the parties to the Ramsar convention of the threat to important wetlands and peatlands in Caithness and Sutherland; and if he will reproduce in the *Official Report* that section of the United Kingdom report which deals with Caithness and Sutherland.

Mr. Ridley: The United Kingdom report to the conference of the parties to the Ramsar convention referred to Caithness and Sutherland in the following terms:

"The blanket mire areas of Britain and Ireland and the landscape of Sutherland and Caithness, in the Flow Country of Scotland, in particular have recently been identified by the International Mires Conservation Group and others as being of global importance and one of the world's outstanding ecosystems. A study in Wales has shown that 35 per cent. of the mires examined have been completely lost since 1900. Lowland raised mires in Scotland and northern England have been reduced by 87 per cent. since 1940 mainly due to afforestation but prior to this agricultural reclamation and peat extraction have taken place. In 1986 the Nature Conservancy Council published a major policy document which reviewed the effects of afforestation on nature conservation in Great Britain, and the Government is considering the recommendations it contains. Of the 192,000 ha of the Flow Country, 35,000 ha have either been planted or approved for planting. Some areas are safeguarded as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and the Government is considering possible ways of ensuring that an appropriate balance between conservation and other land uses is achieved."

Community Charge

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the likely level of the community charge, without safety nets, in the London borough of Southwark.

Mr. Howard: Since the new system will not come into effect until 1990, it is not possible to say what the level of the community charge in the London borough of Southwark will be when it is introduced. However, I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 29 June, at column 45.

Mr. Barry Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the effect on the community charge calculations of the reduction in the rate of grant payable for approved coast protection schemes; and what steps he intends to take to mitigate these effects.

Mr. Howard: The reduction in the maximum rate of grant for approved coast protection schemes will not necessarily have any impact on the community charges levied in particular areas. Under the proposals set out in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714), all areas will be compensated, through the general grant system, for variations in their need to spend on local services. That compensation will be calculated so as to include the cost of financing approved coast protection schemes, to the extent that these costs are not already met by specific grant.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he expects to publish Green or White Papers in respect of his proposed legislation for the introduction of a community charge.

Mr. Howard: The Government's proposals for changes to the local finance system were set out in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) published on 28 January 1986. Consultation on the proposals ran until 31 October 1986 and the Government published a further document "Paying for Local Government, the Community Charge" confirming that they intended to proceed and setting out the proposed administrative arrangements on 15 December 1986, at column 392. The commitment subsequently appeared in the manifesto on which the Government were convincingly re-elected.

County Court, Birmingham

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the Property Services Agency in assessing, in relation to the proposed new county court in Birmingham, the relative merits of (a) preserving the existing Citadel and Central hall site in Corporation street and (b) erecting a new building on a separate site; and what representations the Property Services Agency has received on this matter from Birmingham city council.

Mr. Chope: The Property Services Agency (PSA) is considering various options, including the two referred to, for a new county court complex in Birmingham. The Lord Chancellor's Department is fully involved in an appraisal of the various options and a decision is expected shortly.

Apart from normal negotiations, no other representations have been received from Birmingham city council by the PSA.

SOCIAL SERVICES

State Retirement Pension

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the basic state retirement pension as a percentage of the average manual worker's wage in the years 1957, 1961, 1971 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The table shows the rate of basic pension expressed as a percentage of the net average income¹ of male manual workers at uprating dates in the years specified or the nearest to them. No uprating took place in 1957.

	Single person Per cent.	Married couple Per cent.
January 1958	23.9	36.0
April 1961	23.9	36.2
September 1971	27.3	42.0
April 1987 ²	29.8	45.3

¹ Net average income is gross average earnings less tax and national insurance contributions at the non-contracted out rate.

² Estimated figures. Provisional earnings figures available only for April 1987.

Cervical Cancer Tests (Liverpool)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up a public inquiry into the errors

made by the Liverpool area health authority concerning cervical cancer smear tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: An extensive review is already being carried out under the chairmanship of Mr. James Fitzpatrick, chairman of Liverpool health authority. Any further corrective action must await the report of the review team.

Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening (Private Clinics)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will ask private clinics offering laboratory services for breast and cervical cancer screening facilities for details of any cases of mistakes which have been made and notified to them;

(2) what steps he takes to monitor the effectiveness of the laboratory services for breast and cervical cancer screening offered by private clinics;

(3) whether he will introduce controls on the effectiveness and accuracy of the laboratory services for breast and cancer screening offered by private clinics before licensing their operation;

(4) whether he is satisfied with the standard of quality control provided by private clinics offering laboratory services for breast and cervical cancer screening.

Mrs. Currie: My right hon. Friend has at present no statutory powers enabling him to monitor or control private screening clinics or the laboratory or other services they use.

Breast cancer screening clinics using mammographic x-rays, whether private or National Health Service, will be covered by regulations on the protection of patients from ionising radiation which will be laid before the House later this year. These will require that all medical exposures to ionising radiation conform to accepted medical practice, and that those directing and effecting the exposures are adequately trained in radiation protection and the techniques appropriate to their work.

No licensing system could ensure absolute diagnostic accuracy. Screening techniques are not infallible. There will always be a few false negative and false positive results. The objective must be to keep these to an absolute minimum.

We are however, considering whether statutory control for private breast or cervical cancer screening clinics and the laboratories they use would help to meet this objective. Such control would, however, require primary legislation.

The rules of professional conduct enforced by the General Medical Council apply to all doctors working in NHS or private cancer screening.

Speech Therapists (Upper Waiting Hall)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to speech therapists to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 13 July to Friday 17 July.

Mr. Newton: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 13 to 17 July 1987.

Board and Lodgings Regulations

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff hours and what costs are incurred in administering the board and lodgings regulations with particular reference to the time limits imposed on young people.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Social Fund

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements the Government are making to monitor the operation of the social fund.

Mr. Scott: Responsibility for monitoring the quality of individual decisions will rest in the first instance with local office management assisted by specialist regional teams. The fund will also be monitored at all levels of management on the basis of extensive statistical evidence, which it is planned to gather through the social fund microcomputer system.

Leighton Hospital, Crewe (Waiting Lists)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will specify the waiting list for Leighton hospital, Crewe, in the following specialties (a) surgery, (b) geriatrics and (c) orthopaedics.

Mr. Newton: The latest information centrally available is given in the table. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Crewe district health authority for current information.

*Leighton Hospital, Crewe
Cases on in-patient waiting list at 31 December 1985*

<i>Specialty</i>	<i>Number</i>
Traumatic and Orthopaedic Surgery	402
All other surgical	5,947
Geriatric Medicine	nil
Psychogeriatric	2

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Tom Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for the future of the mobility allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We intend to continue to improve the framework of benefits for disabled people. We have significantly increased the value of the mobility allowance and taken it out of tax. It would be premature to consider further major changes in advance of the results of the current Government survey of disabled people, due to be published next year. We have said that we will consider nearer the time what should be done about the age 75 limit for the allowance, which will not affect any current recipients until November 1989.

NHS (Agency Staff)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list how many operating department assistants now working in the National Health Service have been supplied by outside agencies; and what payment has been made to them in fees over the last 12 months.

Mr. Newton: Information on the numbers of operating department assistants supplied to the National Health Service by outside agencies, and on any payments in fees made to such agencies over the last 12 months, is not collected centrally.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the cost to the Health Service in the Crew health authority for staff who have been employed through agencies of (a) nurses, (b) operating department assistants, (c) ancillary and (d) other staff.

Mr. Newton: The 1985-86 annual accounts of the Crew health authority show the following expenditure for non-National Health Service (agency, etc) staff:

	£
Medical	59,142
Nursing	4,257
Total	63,399

AIDS

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what funding is available to responsible bodies for counselling on matters relating to AIDS.

Mr. Newton: This year we have allocated the following money for counselling:

- £200,000 for counselling training. This is double last year's allocation. There are currently two training centres, at Bolton and St. Mary's hospital, Paddington. Another centre is to open at Birmingham.
- £1 million to drug misuse centres to help them provide, among other things, counselling on AIDS for drug misusers.
- a total of £280,000 to the six haemophilia reference centres, to counsel haemophiliacs and their families.

A number of voluntary bodies in the AIDS field are involved in counselling. Last year we allocated £469,000 to such bodies, though it is not possible to identify how much of this has been spent in counselling. We are making available increased resources to voluntary bodies for the current financial year and we are now considering their allocations. We will also be providing up to £800,000 over the next year for the new National AIDS Trust, which will co-ordinate voluntary effort on AIDS.

We are currently considering the future role of telephone services, including the National Advisory Service on AIDS, in the light of evaluation of the service during the first phase of our public education campaign.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total funding his Department is making available for research into AIDS; and what plans he has for 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Newton: The Department has so far made available £2 million for research into AIDS in 1987-88. No decision has yet been taken on the level of funding for 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Research on AIDS in the United Kingdom is co-ordinated by the Medical Research Council which receives its grant-in-aid from the science budget of the Department of Education and Science. This has been increased by £14.5 million over the next three years to support a

directed research programme aimed at developing a vaccine and anti-viral drugs. An extra £3 million has also been made available for general AIDS research.

Mr. Pawsey: asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's latest estimate of the number of AIDS sufferers in the United Kingdom in 1990.

Mr. Newton: The Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, which collects information about persons suffering from AIDS, has predicted that the numbers of new cases of AIDS will be 1,300 in 1987 and 3,000 in 1988. As yet there are insufficient data for reliable forecasts beyond 1988 to be made.

Pharmaceutical Research

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has any part to play in co-ordinating the research efforts of pharmaceutical companies operating in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: Individual companies decide their own research programmes in the light of their areas of special interest and their commercial judgments. We include a significant element of support for research and development in the prices paid for medicines by the National Health Service, but do not seek to interfere in the decisions by companies operating in the United Kingdom which have an excellent record in medicines discovery and development.

Childhood Leukaemias

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment will take account of the incidence of childhood leukaemias in West Berkshire and North Hampshire district health authority areas and specifically study and investigate any possible link between these leukaemias and the nuclear processes, discharges and emissions from the Aldermaston and Burghfield atomic weapons plants.

Mr. Newton: Evidence on the incidence of childhood leukaemia in west Berkshire and north Hampshire districts is already under consideration by the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment.

Cancer Screening

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities use their own pathology laboratories for dealing with cervical smears; and how many put them out to private contractors.

Mrs. Currie [pursuant to her reply, 30 June 1987, c. 70]: All health authorities have pathology laboratory facilities suitable for the examination of cervical smears. Some health authorities sent smears to private laboratories, particularly where backlogs arose following the sharp increase in the number of cervical smears taken in the last two years. Detailed information on the use of private laboratories is not collected centrally.

Hospitals (Dorset)

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the hospital building programme in Dorset.

Mrs. Currie [pursuant to her reply, 30 June 1987, c. 78]: Dorset is benefiting from the largest ever sustained National Health Service capital building programme. Current hospital building schemes in Dorset include the first phase of the West Dorset district general hospital costing £10.5 million, which is due to take its first patients in September 1987, and the first phase of the Bournemouth district general hospital costing £14.1 million, which is due for completion in December 1987. At Poole general hospital an extension to the maternity unit costing £1.5 million will soon become fully operational, and work is scheduled to commence on 6 July on an assessment/day unit for elderly people, costing £3.6 million. Work is also scheduled to start in July on a mental illness unit at St. Ann's hospital, Canford Cliffs, at a cost of £2 million. The second phase of the Bournemouth district general hospital is approved at a cost of £13.7 million and is scheduled to follow immediately upon completion of the first phase.

SCOTLAND

Forestry

34. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans for a comprehensive revision of forestry policy.

Mr. Rifkind: A comprehensive review of forestry policy took place in 1979-80. Since then a number of modifications have been made to reflect changing circumstances. Forestry policy will continue to be kept under review and appropriate changes introduced as and when they are considered necessary.

Councillors (Travel and Subsistence)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now undertake a fundamental review of the level of travel and subsistence allowances paid to councillors; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. The level of travel and subsistence allowances for councillors is reviewed each year as a matter of routine. The views of the local authority associations, as expressed from time to time, are taken into account in these reviews.

Farmers (Subscriptions and Charges)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers had access to free advice from the Scottish agricultural colleges before the introduction of subscriptions and charges; and how many farmers have now paid subscriptions in order to participate in the new system.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Prior to the introduction of subscriptions and charges all farmers in the agricultural industry in Scotland had access to free advice from the Scottish agricultural colleges. Since 1 April 1987 some 3,100 farmers have contracted to purchase services from the SAC. Advice specifically on conservation, diversification and animal welfare continues to be available without charge.

Electoral Register

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how many electors who should have been qualified to vote in the recent general election

were not able to do so because of errors or omissions from the electoral register; and if he will take any steps to improve the accuracy of the register in future.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A study by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys of electoral registration in Great Britain in 1981 estimated that almost 95 per cent. of the eligible people in Scotland were included in the electoral register. A more up-to-date figure is not available. Steps taken to improve the accuracy of the register include an annual publicity campaign to encourage those eligible, especially young people, to make sure that they are included in the draft register, and to check the draft register when it is published at the end of November each year.

Housing (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the numbers of people on Scottish local authority housing waiting lists in each year since 1979.

Mr. Rifkind: Reliable information on a consistent basis is not available centrally.

Contaminated Food

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received representations about contaminated food found in Safeways' Edinburgh stores; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations about this matter other than the private notice question from the hon. Member himself on 30 June.

The Lothian and Borders police force is continuing its investigation in close consultation with the director of environmental health of Edinburgh district council and it is important that that investigation should proceed unhampered.

Voluntary Bodies

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the financial assistance given to voluntary bodies under section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978, as amended, in 1985-86 and 1986-87, respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The amounts of grant paid by the Scottish Home and Health Department to voluntary organisations in respect of their national activities, under section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 as amended, in the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87 were £567,000 and £686,000¹ respectively.

¹ Provisional figure.

Health Boards

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial resources he has made available in the present financial year to (a) Orkney health board and (b) Shetland health board to enable them to give financial assistance to voluntary organisations under section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978, as amended; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend, in terms of the National Health Service (Functions

of Health Boards) (Scotland) Order 1983, delegated to health boards the power under section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 to give financial assistance to voluntary organisations in respect of their local activities. Health boards may, from within their general revenue allocations, make grants of up to £5,000 to voluntary organisations for such local activities within the boards' areas which are complementary to the health services required by statute. It is for the boards concerned to decide what organisations they wish to assist.

Fisheries Protection (Fokker Aircraft)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the delay in commissioning his Department's recently acquired Fokker aircraft for offshore fishery protection patrols; how long he expects this duty to have to be covered by Cessna Titans from the inshore patrol service or other temporary arrangements; and what will be the cost of this delay.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provisional date for the acceptance trials of the Fokker F27-200 being acquired to undertake fisheries surveillance is 8 July 1987. The tender specification called for an aircraft to be delivered by 31 July 1987 and the acquisition contract indicated a delivery date of 1 June 1987. In order to have the endurance of the selected aircraft enhanced by the installation of extra fuel tanks a revised delivery date of early July was agreed. The introduction of the aircraft is therefore on programme. The interim surveillance Dornier 228 ceased operations on 26 June 1987 and the Cessna Titan will operate temporarily in the offshore role until mid/late-August when the Fokker F27 and aircrew have completed their pre-operational training. No additional costs are involved.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farming Policy

15. Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to introduce controls to prevent farming areas which have been traditionally dependent on cereals from moving into sheep and beef production to the detriment of upland areas currently dependent on sheep and beef rearing.

Mr. Gummer: The Government will continue to provide support for livestock through compensatory allowances to meet the special need of the uplands. We will not allow grain producers to use any future set aside scheme to move into sheep or beef production.

Agricultural Land

16. Mr. Chapman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the criteria for classifying the grades of agricultural land.

Mr. Gummer: This Department is undertaking work which will improve the objectivity of agricultural land classifications. We plan to consult external practitioners later this year with a view to introducing the revised system early in 1988.

Common Agricultural Policy

18. Mr. Marlow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he anticipates major reforms in the common agricultural policy.

27. Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the progress of reform of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: Major reforms have been achieved in the dairy and beef sectors, and significant further progress has just been achieved in the cereals and oilseeds sectors at the price fixing concluded yesterday. I shall continue to work for further reforms.

Mr. Favell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on recent discussions with fellow European Economic Community Ministers on the funding of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Agriculture Policy (White Paper)

20. Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a White Paper on agriculture policy.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government set out their approach to agricultural policy on 10 March 1987 in the publication "Farming UK", which was part of the "Farming and Rural Enterprise" package.

Cereals

21. Mr. John Carlile asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to curb cereal production; and what measures he proposes to introduce to reduce cereal surpluses.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall continue to pursue a policy of bringing cereals production more into line with demand by continuing price restraint, supporting measures to make intervention a safety net rather than an alternative market outlet and promoting the diversion of land out of cereals.

31. Mr. Conway asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to convey to his European Community colleagues the support of British farmers for the Government's rejection of the two-tier cereals pricing policy.

Mr. Gummer: I welcome the support of British farmers for the Government's rejection of a two-tier pricing policy for cereals and have made clear to my European Community colleagues that I am not prepared to accept policies of this kind which discriminate against British farmers.

29. Mr. Yeo asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding cereal surpluses.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Over recent months we have continued to receive representations about the over-production of cereals, including from Members of Parliament, representatives of the farming community and the cereals trade, and members of the general public. It remains our policy to bring production of cereals more into line with demand.

Sheepmeat

23. Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he

will be making to the European Community Council of Ministers in the negotiations on the sheepmeat regime at the forthcoming meeting.

28. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he is putting forward to the European Community on the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Our sheepmeat sector is buoyant and expanding, and the Community sheepmeat regime has been an important factor underlying this.

Dairy Industry

24. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the dairy sector of the agriculture industry.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already met the president of the National Farmers Union and intend to have further meetings at which current issues in the agricultural sector—including milk—will be discussed.

Green Pound

26. **Mr. Robert Hicks** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he hopes to make an announcement regarding the revaluation of the green pound; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

Food Labelling

30. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received on food labelling.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I regularly receive comments and inquiries from many sources on a wide range of labelling matters. The most recent representations I have received have been on various aspects of the EC proposals to amend the food labelling directive (and on the EC proposals to protect the designations used for dairy products.)

Food Surpluses

22. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the sums which will be spent per week in the current calendar year by the European Economic Community on the disposal and storage of food surpluses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The 1987 Community budget provides for expenditure of about 335 mecu (£240 million) a week on the storage and disposal of agricultural products.

25. **Mr. Madden** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to reduce surpluses in production arising in the United Kingdom from the operation of the European Economic Community common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter).

Compassion in World Farming (Exhibition)

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Compassion in World Farming organisation to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. MacGregor: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 6 July to Friday 10 July.

Coast Protection

Mr. Barry Field asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the effect on the finances of South Wight borough council of the reduction in the rate of grant payable for approved coast protection schemes; and what steps he intends to take to mitigate these effects.

Mr. Gummer: The revised maximum grant rate will come into operation only for coast protection schemes submitted after 30 September. There will therefore be no effect on schemes already approved.

As for future schemes, I can make no estimate of the effect the new maximum rate may have, since consideration of the particular schemes to be submitted from its area is a matter for the South Wight borough council, not for my Department.

Light Dues

19. **Mr. Salmond** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the total cost to the fishing fleet in (a) Scotland and (b) England and Wales of the Government's decision to extend to fishing vessels liability for light dues.

Mr. Gummer: The estimated annual yield of £1 million for light dues would be split fairly evenly between various sectors of the fishing fleet.

A fishing boat will now save more than 50 per cent. on the cost of a United Kingdom navigation transmitter and this therefore prerepresents a significant reduction in its costs.

EC Payments

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek clarification from the European Economic Community Commission on whether the 19 million lire paid by the Italian authorities to organisations linked to the Mafia organisation, for the alleged delivery of non-existent fruit juice to bodies including North Atlantic Treaty Organisation headquarters in Sicily, qualified for reimbursement by the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor [pursuant to his reply, 1 July 1987, c. 121]: This is a matter solely for the Commission and the Italian authorities. My officials have, however, established that the Commission is aware of the allegations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Disarmament

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what preparations Her Majesty's Government are making to participate in the United Nations conference on disarmament and development to be held in New York from 24 August to 11 September; and whether documents detailing Her Majesty's Government's proposals to the conference will be made available to the public.

Mr. Mellor: The United Kingdom has played an active and constructive role throughout the preparations for this conference in particular during the four meetings of its preparatory committee.

Texts of United Kingdom statements at the conference will be made available to the public and subsequently reproduced in the "Quarterly Review" published by the FCO's arms control and disarmament research unit.

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what considerations have been given to the Soviet Union's proposals on the verification of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty as tabled at the United Nations disarmament conference in Geneva in June; and when he expects to respond formally to this initiative.

Mr. Mellor: The Soviet text gives welcome recognition to the importance of verification, and suggests a willingness on the part of the Soviet Union to take matters forward on a co-operative basis. However, there is still no agreement at the Geneva conference on disarmament on the terms for a mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear testing issues. Such a committee would be one method of taking forward discussion of the Soviet proposal, to which no formal response is required.

Iran-Iraq War

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent measures Her Majesty's Government have initiated concerning the ending of the Iran-Iraq war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are active at both the United Nations and EC in seeking an end to the conflict. We have refused to sell any lethal equipment to either side since the conflict began and would support a United Nations-sponsored arms embargo. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs set out our position more fully in his speech in the House on 26 June.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will now ban any sale of arms to Iran or Iraq forthwith.

Mr. Mellor: Our policy is well known. As a direct result of our impartiality in the conflict, we prohibit the export to either Iran or Iraq of defence-related equipment that could significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the conflict.

The detailed guidelines were set out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 29 October 1985, at column

454, in his answer to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), and they remain in force.

Hong Kong

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, after 30 June 1997, the laws of Hong Kong will be varied to conform to the criminal law of the People's Republic of China by the introduction of the death penalty for economic crimes such as bribery, theft, speculation and embezzlement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Under the joint declaration, such matters fall within the high degree of autonomy to be enjoyed by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during the transitional period before 30 June 1997 the laws of Hong Kong will be varied, to conform to the criminal law of the People's Republic of China, by the introduction of the death penalty for economic crimes such as bribery, theft, speculation and embezzlement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether safeguards embodied in the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967; and in particular those guaranteeing the post custodial treatment of any person extradited under provisions of this Act, will be continued in force in Hong Kong after 30 June 1997; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if the basic law of the Hong Kong special administrative region will prohibit the removal of prisoners detained in Hong Kong to other parts of the People's Republic of China after 30 June 1997; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if the basic law of the People's Republic of China will prohibit the removal of prisoners detained in Hong Kong to other parts of the People's Republic of China after 30 June 1997; and if he will make a statement;

(4) whether current United Kingdom extradition treaties to and from Hong Kong are to be renegotiated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As my hon. Friend, the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) told the then hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) on 14 May, at column 292, the arrangements currently in force in respect of Hong Kong as regards the return of fugitive offenders to and from the territory cannot subsist in their present form, beyond the resumption by China of sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997. We have been considering what action would be appropriate to ensure that suitable arrangements can continue in force for Hong Kong after that date. The continuity after 1997 of such arrangements affecting Hong Kong must be the subject of consultation with the Chinese Government. Any such consultation would be confidential.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Governor of Hong Kong has authority to make any arrangements with

foreign states, including the United Kingdom, guaranteeing the policies of the Hong Kong special administrative region after 30 June 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The future Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government will determine their own policies within the limits of the high degree of autonomy which they will enjoy under the terms of the Sino-British joint declaration, a legally binding international agreement. Under its terms we and the Chinese Government have also agreed to consider in the period before 1 July 1997 the action necessary to ensure the continued application after that date of international rights and obligations affecting Hong Kong.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the basic law of the special administrative region of Hong Kong will contain any constitutional prohibition on the retroactive application of legislation by the People's Republic of China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The drafting of the basic law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is a matter for the Chinese Government. The policies of the Chinese Government towards Hong Kong, as set out in the joint declaration, will be stipulated in the basic law. The joint declaration provides that the laws of the Special Administrative Region will be the basic law, the laws previously in force in Hong Kong, and laws enacted by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region legislature. The joint declaration contains no reference to the retroactive application of legislation by the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the right and power to interpret the basic law of the Hong Kong special region will be vested with the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China or with the special administrative region of Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Under the Chinese constitution, the basic law, like other Chinese statutes, is subject to interpretation by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. The joint declaration provides that judicial power, including the power of final judgment, will be vested in the courts of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if death sentences passed in Hong Kong prior to 1997, but commuted to life imprisonment by the Governor of Hong Kong, may be carried out after 30 June 1997 by the authorities of the special administrative region of Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The joint declaration provides that the laws currently in force in Hong Kong will remain basically unchanged. In Hong Kong the commutation of a death sentence is irrevocable.

St. Helena

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much was spent on conserving the endemic plants of St. Helena for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: The approximate figures are:

	£
1982-83	2,500
1983-84	2,500
1984-85	5,000
1985-86	23,000
1986-87	27,000

In addition, the World Wildlife Fund gave a grant of £7,000 in 1984, which has been used to provide new equipment for the St. Helena Government's special nursery.

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what attempts are being made, and with what success, to stop the St. Helena olive from becoming extinct.

Mr. Chris Patten: A number of attempts have been made to propagate from the single surviving specimen of the St. Helena olive discovered on the island in 1977. Ninety five cuttings were taken in 1986, of which five rooted and two survived. These are being nurtured carefully in St. Helena's special nursery. Two more seeds germinated earlier this year and recent cuttings are showing promise. The parent tree is healthy and is visited regularly by Agriculture and Forestry Department personnel. A number of legal and practical measures have been taken to protect the endemic flora of St. Helena, including the St. Helena olive.

Iran

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's current relations with Iran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs set out the position fully in his answer to my hon. Friend, the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) on 1 July, at columns 478-79.

Cyprus

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to make a response to the third report from the Foreign Affairs Committee on Cyprus, HC 23, Session 1986-87.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall study the report with the greatest care; we shall respond in due course by the publication of a Command Paper. It is well understood by all concerned that the Committee's report and recommendations represent its own views, not those of the Government.

EC Research Programme

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Kingdom will remove its objection to the European Community 1987-91 framework research programme.

Mrs. Chalker [pursuant to her reply, 1 July 1987, c. 108]: The following is a corrected answer.

The European Council agreed that the appropriations in the budget for the 1987 financial year should be used for

current programmes pending the definitive adoption of the multiannual framework programme. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear our agreement that spending could continue at this year's level over the five years of the framework programme.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the cost so far to public funds of the secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference; how many civil servants are employed there; what functions they perform; and on which Vote this expenditure falls.

Mr. Tom King [pursuant to the reply, 29 June 1987, c. 281]: The cost to United Kingdom public funds of the salaries and running expenses of the secretariat up to 31 May 1987 has been approximately £313,000. This expenditure falls to the Law, Order, Protective and Miscellaneous Services, Northern Ireland Vote. The function of the secretariat is to act as a channel of communication between the United Kingdom and Irish Governments, and to service the Intergovernmental Conference. This work is undertaken on the United Kingdom side by three officials, along with support staff.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in what ways the Anglo-Irish Agreement has contributed to peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland since 15 November 1985.

Mr. Tom King [pursuant to the reply, 29 June 1987, c. 28]: We believe that the agreement respects the proper interests of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland and does not diminish the rights of any; it, for example, offers a further reassurance on the rights of the majority in Northern Ireland, it has contributed to the bringing forward of measures to recognise the rights and identities of both traditions, and it has opened the way to intensified cross-border co-operation. In doing so, it has pointed the way towards peace, stability and reconciliation; further progress can be made which will, in part depend on the willingness of constitutional politicians to engage, irrespective of their attitudes to the agreement, in renewed dialogue.

DEFENCE

Women's Needs

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the main needs of women in the policy areas within the sphere of his Department's activities; what has been done to identify and quantify these needs and to monitor services delivery; what consultation is carried out with women to ensure their views are adequately represented; and what training is given to his staff to raise their appreciation of the needs of women.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence is not responsible for any policy areas relating specifically to the needs of women. The recruitment and management of civilian staff in the Ministry of Defence is conducted in accordance with the equal opportunities policies of the Civil Service; and equal opportunities issues are addressed on appropriate supervision and management training courses.

RTM 322 Engine

Mr. Page asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are being taken to evaluate the effectiveness of the RTM 322 helicopter engine in the EH 101; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The RTM 322 engine is a possible option for the EH 101 helicopter. The implications of introducing it into this programme are being evaluated but no decision has yet been taken.

Mr. Page asked the Secretary of State for Defence what results have emerged from the evaluation of the RTM 322 engine in the SH 60B

Mr. Sainsbury: The United States Navy's evaluation of the RTM 322 engine in an SH 60B helicopter is a matter for the United States authorities. I understand that it did not begin until 6 June.

Trident Submarines

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for Defence when contracts for the third Trident submarine will be tendered.

Mr. Sainsbury: The invitation to tender for the third Trident submarine is likely to be issued within the next year.

Soviet Submarines

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether current North Atlantic Treaty Organisation plans involve attacks against Soviet submarines north of the Greenland-Iceland-Norway gap in the early stages of a future war; and whether any such plans detail the use of Royal Navy forces for the task of attacking Soviet submarines.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The wartime tasks of the Royal Navy in support of NATO are described in paragraph 404 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987". In accordance with the practice of successive Governments, I am not generally prepared to disclose details of operational plans.

United States Maritime Strategy

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Royal Navy has adopted any part of the maritime strategy of the United States; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The maritime strategy to which the hon. Gentleman refers is a United States national strategy. The United States Navy have kept us fully in touch with their thinking. There have been no recent changes in the basic maritime strategy of either NATO or the Royal Navy.

Royal Navy Exercises

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list for each of the last 10 years (a) the naval exercises in which Royal Navy vessels have taken part, (b) the naval exercises in which Royal Navy vessels have taken part which have mainly involved ship manoeuvres north of the Greenland-Iceland-Norway gap, (c) the naval exercises in which Royal Navy vessels have taken part

which have partially involved ship manoeuvres north of the Greenland-Iceland-Norway gap and (d) the naval exercises in which Royal Navy ships have taken part which have mainly involved vessel manoeuvres in the Norwegian sea;

(2) if he will list for each of the last 10 years (a) the naval exercises in which Royal Navy vessels have taken part which have partially involved ship manoeuvres in the Norwegian sea, (b) the naval exercises in which Royal Navy vessels have taken part which have involved any ship manoeuvres in the Barents sea, (c) the Royal Navy forces assigned to the east Atlantic region and (d) naval exercises that have included simulated air strikes against targets in the north of the USSR that the Royal Navy has taken part in.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The major exercises, and their approximate location, in which Royal Navy vessels have taken part are described in the annual "Statement on the Defence Estimates". It is not our general practice to give details of the operational manoeuvres of Royal Navy surface ships and submarines, or details of exercise scenarios. The vast majority of Royal Navy major surface ships and submarines are committed to the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic and the Commander-in-Chief Channel. Of these vessels, the numbers committed to SACLANT are significantly greater, and in practice a high proportion of these vessels has been maintained in the eastern Atlantic.

Naval Expenditure

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each of the next five years the current projected total anti-submarine warfare expenditure and total naval expenditure.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to publish detailed information about the Department's internal expenditure projections. We do, however, plan to maintain a substantial investment in naval expenditure, including anti-submarine warfare.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each of the next five years the current projected expenditures for (a) nuclear hunter-killer submarines, (b) non-nuclear submarines, (c) frigates, (d) minesweepers and (e) anti-submarine warfare capable aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to publish detailed information about the Departments' internal expenditure projections.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he will list for each of the last 10 years the total anti-submarine warfare expenditure and the total naval expenditure by Her Majesty's Government;

(2) whether he will list for each of the last 10 years Her Majesty's Government's expenditure on (a) nuclear hunter-killer submarines, (b) non-nuclear submarines, (c) frigates, (d) minesweepers and (e) anti-submarine warfare capable aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. However, I refer the hon. Member to the functional analysis of the defence budget which has appeared in volume 2 of successive Statements on the Defence Estimates since 1980.

Vessel and Aircraft Statistics

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list for each of the past 10 years the number of (a) nuclear attack submarines, (b) non-nuclear submarines, (c) frigates, (d) minesweepers and (e) anti-submarine warfare capable aircraft in service with the Royal Navy.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the Annex entitled "Strength of the Fleet" which has appeared in successive Statements on the Defence Estimates over this period. It contains the information requested, with the exception of the numbers of operational aircraft which it is not our practice to reveal.

Anti-tank Operations

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the findings of the investigation comparing attack helicopters with tanks in the anti-tank rôle.

Mr. Sainsbury: Project Foresight, which commenced in 1981, is part of a continuing series of studies aimed at maintaining the most effective balance of weapons systems within the central region of Europe. The most recent study examined the relative cost-effectiveness of a number of anti-armour weapon systems. It concluded that the future mix of weapons should be derived from a broad-based investment strategy, in which a place should be found both for a light attack helicopter equipped with a long range anti-tank weapon, and for a main battle tank: the details of the study are classified. Its conclusions will be taken into account in our future decision-making in the normal way.

Radioactive Discharges

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make available to the committee on the medical aspects of radiation in the environment a complete and unabridged record of all known radioactive discharges, both intentional and otherwise, at the Aldermaston and Burghfield atomic weapons plants to assist the committee on the medical aspects of radiation in the environment in its investigations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: During the last year my Department provided to the National Radiological Protection Board a complete record on an annual basis of the airborne and liquid radioactive discharges from the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston and the Royal Ordnance Factory at Burghfield, since their inception. NRPB have used this information to estimate doses and risks to members of the public from the discharges. These have been made available to the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the environment and were recently published in NRPB R-202.

Research Contracts

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list Ministry of Defence research contracts currently placed with United Kingdom universities and other institutions of higher education.

Mr. Sainsbury: The defence research establishments have currently 742 research agreements and 68 contracts

with a wide range of United Kingdom universities and other institutions. It is not our policy to publish details of these arrangements.

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Royal Aircraft Establishment has any research agreements or contracts with any universities or other institutes of higher education in the United Kingdom or abroad.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Royal Aircraft Establishment has currently 226 research agreements or contracts with United Kingdom universities and other institutes of higher education. There are currently no such agreements or contracts with institutions abroad.

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment has any research agreements or contracts with any universities or other institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom or abroad.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Royal Signals and Radar Establishment has currently 77 research agreements or contracts with United Kingdom universities and other institutes of higher education. There are currently no such agreements with institutions abroad.

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston has any research contracts or agreements with any universities or other institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom or abroad.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Atomic Weapons Research Establishment has currently 30 research contracts or agreements with universities and other institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom. There are currently no such contracts or agreements with institutions abroad.

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether (a) the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Aircraft Establishment at Boscombe Down, (b) The Royal Armament Research Development Establishment, (c) the Admiralty Research Establishment, (d) the Chemical Defence Establishment at Porton Down, (e) the Royal Ordnance factory at Burghfield and (f) the Royal Ordnance factory at Llanishen have any research contracts or agreements with universities or other institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Mr. Sainsbury: The establishments concerned currently have the following research agreements or contracts:

	Number
A & AEE	Nil
RARDE	123
ARE	115
CDE	73
ROF Burghfield	Nil
ROF Cardiff	Nil

There are currently no such agreements or contracts with institutions abroad.

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many research projects in universities and other institutions of higher education have been funded under the Joint Research Council — Ministry of Defence research grants scheme in each year since the inception of the scheme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Numbers of research agreements approved for funding under the joint Research Council/MOD research grants scheme, by financial year, are as follows:

	Number
1986-87	63
1987-88 (April-June)	19

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence which United Kingdom universities or other institutions of higher education have received research contracts under the United States strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is for those universities or other institutions of higher education who hold such contracts to decide whether to divulge such information publicly.

Defence Scientific Advisory Council

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will name all the chairmen of the Defence Scientific Advisory Council since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Chairman of the DSAC in 1979 was Professor Sir Sam Edwards, PhD, FInstP, FIMA, FRS. He was succeeded in 1981 by Mr. P. E. Trier, CBE, DTech, FEng, FIEE, FInstP, FIMA. The current Chairman is Dr. J. I. G. Cadogan, CBE, DSc, CChem, FRSC, FRSE, FRS, who was appointed in 1985.

Defence Scientific Advisory Group

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the technology boards of the Defence Scientific Advisory Council and the function of each individual board.

Mr. Sainsbury: The function of the Defence Scientific Advisory Council is to advise the Secretary of State for Defence on scientific and technological aspects of research and development work in the Ministry of Defence. The boards provide specialised inputs in aerospace technology, marine technology, military technology and the technologies associated with systems and electronics, chemical and biological defence, information processing and assessment.

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many academics from universities or other institutions of higher education sit on the Defence Scientific Advisory Council.

Mr. Sainsbury: Currently 13 academics, from universities or other institutions of higher education, sit on the Defence Scientific Advisory Council.

Defence Lectureship Scheme

Mr. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many academics are at present sponsored under the defence lectureship scheme; and at which universities or other institutions of higher education.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence currently sponsors a total of five defence lectureships in British academic institutions. These are at the University of Aberdeen; the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth; Kings College, London; and two posts at the University of Cambridge. A sixth defence lecturer will take up his post

at the University of Birmingham on 1 October 1987. A former defence lecturer, at the University of Leeds, will continue to receive support funds from the Ministry of Defence until the end of the 1987-88 academic year.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

32. **Mr. John Greenway** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements are being made, during the current industrial action by Customs and Excise staff, to ensure that value added tax repayments are expedited; and if businesses receiving their repayments late will automatically receive the late payment supplement.

Mr. Brooke: Industrial action at the VAT computer system at Shoeburyness ceased on Monday 29 June. The system is currently being restored to normal working and repayments of VAT will be given a high priority during this period of recovery. Repayments unreasonably delayed more than 30 days will automatically receive an additional payment of 5 per cent. of the repayment claimed.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the effect on retailers of the delay arising from the breakdown of the value added tax computer at Shoeburyness in the repayments of moneys due to them; if he will take steps to ensure the earliest possible repayment of such moneys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson [pursuant to his reply, 1 July 1987, c. 95]: No detailed information is available but I understand that temporary cash flow difficulties have been reported by a number of traders. The computer system at Shoeburyness is currently being restored to normal working and repayments of VAT will be given a high priority during this period of recovery. Repayments unreasonably delayed more than 30 days will receive an additional payment of 5 per cent. of the repayment claimed.

EC Budget (United Kingdom Contribution)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total net contribution made by the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community in each of the previous five years; and if these figures take account of the transfer from European Economic Community to national responsibility of expenditure on agricultural policies like the disposal of butter surpluses.

Mr. Brooke [pursuant to his reply, 1 July 1987, c. 95.]: Details of the United Kingdom's net payments to European Community institutions for the past five financial years are contained in the last public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 56-II, table 3.3, page 68). These figures take account only of payments actually made to or received from the institutions concerned. During this period there was nothing analogous to the scheme for the deferred reimbursement of expenditure on the disposal of butter stocks which was agreed by the Agriculture Council this year.

Civil Servants (Local Government Service)

Mr. Tom Arnold asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the likely level of requests

for special leave by civil servants who are also elected councillors serving on police authorities or residuary bodies, following the abolition of the metropolitan counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: None. It is a matter for individual employing Departments. The rules covering special leave for voluntary public service are laid down in paragraphs 870-873 of the "Civil Service Pay and Conditions of Service Code", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

Group of Five

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet his G5 partners.

Mr. Lilley: The Finance Ministers of the major industrial nations meet from time to time to discuss a range of international economic issues.

R v Taylor and Muller Butcher (Costs)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give an estimate of the overall charge on public funds including an estimate of expenditure in time and money by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, arising from the outcome of the case of Regina v Taylor and Muller Butcher in Reading Crown court on 23 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Some administrative costs cannot be ascertained but the estimated overall charge on public funds is £11,437; of which the estimated expenditure by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is 105 man days and £11,017.

Queen's Speech

Mr. Thurnham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about proposals in the Queen's Speech for which he is responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The proposals have been widely welcomed.

Widows' Pensions

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates are available to him of the cost of introducing the payment of a widow's pension to the widows of post-retirement marriages to public servants.

Mr. Brooke: In accordance with the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, public service pension schemes already provide pensions for the widows of post-retirement marriages in respect of their husband's service since 6 April 1978. The act did not require occupational pension schemes to make similar provision for those retiring before 6 April 1978, and it has been the practice of successive Governments not to make retrospective changes in public service pensions schemes. Estimates of the cost of extending the provision for those retiring before 6 April 1978 are not readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Liverpool Freeport

Mr. Parry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied with the working of the Liverpool freeport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply, 1 July 1987, c. 95*]: The free zone experiment was initiated for a fixed five-year period. Liverpool has reported a steady growth in business since it commenced operations, and I hope that this trend will continue.

Mr. Parry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has assessed what effects the Manx freeport will have on the Liverpool freeport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply, 1 July 1987, c. 95*]: The Manx freeport is not yet operational and so has had no effect on trade through Liverpool. But we will continue to monitor the free zone experiment during its five-year life.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 3 July 1987

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

City Technical College, Nottingham

Mr. Allen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he estimates the first city technical college in Nottingham will be opened.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend announced on 4 June that sponsorship had been pledged for the fourth of the proposed network of city technology colleges in Nottingham. The school's sponsors wish to provide this opportunity for young people in Nottingham as soon as possible.

Teachers (Duties)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is his Department's definition of the duties of a school teacher in the role of accompanying children on foreign educational visits within his contract of employment under the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987;

(2) what is his Department's definition of the duties of a school teacher in the role of accompanying children on non-curriculum and examination related trips within his contract of employment under the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is a matter for teachers' employers and the head teacher to define the particular duties of a teacher against the background of the duties set out in orders made by my right hon. Friend under section 3 of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987. How far particular activities should be regarded as duties falling within a teacher's contract of employment and how far they should be treated as voluntary is a matter to be determined by reference to the particular circumstances of each case taking into account a teacher's contract of employment and any relevant instructions, guidance or policies of the teacher's employers. A teacher who engages in activities of the kind referred to by the hon. Member will have his or her normal responsibility for the pupil's discipline, health and safety.

WALES

National Museum of Wales

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the establishment of the National Museum of Wales at 1 May 1984, 1 May 1985 and 1 May 1987.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Annual returns of staff employed by the National Museum of Wales relate to full time equivalent staff in post on 1 January. On this basis the numbers employed were:

	Number
1984	385½
1985	388½
1987	387½

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the indirect expenses charged by the National Museum of Wales against the receipts raised by it from the recent exhibition of masterpieces of that museum in Japan, and as to the proportion of total funds raised represented by those expenses.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Indirect expenses amounted to an estimated £80,000, equivalent to about 40 per cent. of total receipts.

Rates

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the accumulated reduction in rate support grant since 1978-79 in Wales at 1987-88 prices on a basis comparable with the information supplied by the Secretary of State for the Environment in response to a question from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) in relation to rate support grant in England, 29 June, *Official Report*, column 43.

Mr. Peter Walker: The reduction in rate support grant since 1978-79 in Wales at 1987-88 prices is £104.1 million on a basis comparable with the information supplied for England.

The following table gives a breakdown of the figures:

Reduction between	£ million
1978-79 and 1979-80	14.5
1978-79 and 1980-81	23.8
1978-79 and 1981-82	45.4
1978-79 and 1982-83	47.3
1978-79 and 1983-84	72.8
1978-79 and 1984-85	108.9
1978-79 and 1985-86	140.3
1978-79 and 1986-87	119.4
1978-79 and 1987-88	104.1

Notes:

(i) For 1978-79 to 1980-81 rate support grant comprised needs, resources and domestic elements.

(ii) From 1981-82 rate support grant comprises block grant and domestic rate relief grant.

(iii) Rate support grant figures are final for 1981-82 to 1983-84. Block grant entitlements are based on outturn expenditure for 1984-85, revised estimates of expenditure for 1985-86 and 1986-87 and budgets for 1987-88. The total domestic rate relief grant is final for all years.

(iv) Figures are expressed in 1987-88 prices using the GDP deflator.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the most recent available figures for the number of staff presently employed by the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Grist: At 31 March 1987 there were 4,845 people (4,601 full-time equivalent) employed by the Welsh water authority.

Housing Investment Allocations

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the housing investment allocations made to all housing authorities in Wales for each of the years 1978-79 to 1987-88 at 1987-88 constant prices.

Mr. Grist: I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Local Authority Employees

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the most recent available figure for the total number of persons employed on a full-time basis, or full-time equivalent, by county and district authorities in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The total number of persons employed by Welsh county and district authorities in March 1987 was 120,418 on a full-time equivalent basis.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the most recent available figure for the total number of persons employed on a full-time, or full-time equivalent, basis by local authorities in carrying out the following functions: refuse collection, the cleaning of streets and buildings, vehicle maintenance, catering and ground maintenance.

Mr. Grist: The detailed breakdown of the number of persons employed by local authorities to carry out these particular functions is not available centrally. Aggregate statistics on local authority manpower levels in Wales are published in press notices issued quarterly by the Welsh

Office on behalf of the joint manpower watch group and I have placed a copy of the press notice in the Library of the House.

National Curriculum

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales to what extent the proposed national educational curriculum will make provision for the teaching of the Welsh language, and of Welsh history and culture in the schools of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Government intend to ensure that the national curriculum is flexible enough to take account of the needs of children in Wales. These needs embrace the teaching of the Welsh language and teaching through the medium of Welsh, and the study of Welsh history and culture. The extent of this provision will need to be determined as part of the exercise of developing the national curriculum.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table exemplifying community charges and non-domestic rates for each local authority in Wales, assuming that the Government's proposals for the reform of local finance had been fully in place in 1987-88, on a basis comparable with the information provided in response to a question from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) concerning local authorities in England, *Official Report*, 29 June, column 44.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is given in the following table:

Summary of impact of Green Paper proposals on domestic and non-domestic sectors for rating authority areas in Wales in 1987/88.

	Domestic sector				Non-domestic sector		
	Average rate bill per hereditament	Community charge for spending at GRE	Overspend on GRE	Community charge with no "safety net"	Actual rate poundage now	National non- domestic rate poundage	Change to NNDR poundage
	£	£	£ per adult	£	p	p	per cent.
Alyn and Deeside	329	125	7	132	228.5	236.5	3.5
Colwyn	336	125	19	144	246.1	236.5	-3.9
Delyn	327	125	12	137	233.2	236.5	1.4
Glyndwr	263	125	12	138	229.5	236.5	3.1
Rhuddlan	326	125	9	134	233.7	236.5	1.2
Wrexham Maelor	292	125	14	140	235.0	236.5	0.6
Carmarthen	220	125	11	136	239.5	236.5	-1.3
Ceredigion	232	125	3	128	236.2	236.5	0.1
Dinewr	197	125	—	125	235.4	236.5	0.5
Llanelli	238	125	24	150	253.6	236.5	-6.8
Preseli Pembrokeshire	221	125	1	127	235.2	236.5	0.6
South Pembrokeshire	255	125	-1	124	238.7	236.5	-0.9
Blaenau Gwent	202	125	21	146	238.3	236.5	-0.7
Islwyn	222	125	11	137	230.5	236.5	2.6
Monmouth	311	125	6	131	230.1	236.5	2.8
Newport	316	125	7	132	230.5	236.5	2.6
Torfaen	271	125	17	142	237.3	236.5	-0.3
Aberconwy	292	125	1	127	228.7	236.5	3.4
Arfon	198	125	-1	124	223.8	236.5	5.7
Dwyfor	225	125	3	128	228.3	236.5	3.6
Meirionnydd	218	125	1	127	219.1	236.5	7.9
Ynys Mon	256	125	-2	123	223.0	236.5	6.0
Cynon Valley	174	125	10	135	250.9	236.5	-5.8
Merthyr Tydfil	206	125	24	149	258.0	236.5	-8.3
Ogwr	266	125	17	142	260.1	236.5	-9.1
Rhondda	144	125	26	151	262.0	236.5	-9.7
Rhyney Valley	235	125	23	148	257.8	236.5	-8.3

	Domestic sector				Non-domestic sector		
	Average rate bill per hereditament	Community charge for spending at GRE	Overspend on GRE	Community charge with no "safety net"	Actual rate poundage now	National non- domestic rate poundage	Change to NNDR pound- age
	£	£	£ per adult	£	p	p	per cent.
Taff-Ely	254	125	22	147	259.4	236.5	-8.8
Brecknock	229	125	-4	121	225.5	236.5	4.9
Montgomeryshire	213	125	-18	108	210.7	236.5	12.2
Radnor	212	125	-13	112	213.8	236.5	10.6
Cardiff	335	125	-22	103	210.6	236.5	12.3
Vale of Glamorgan	320	125	-8	117	217.9	236.5	8.5
Port Talbot	263	125	56	181	264.3	236.5	-10.5
Lliw Valley	237	125	39	164	262.4	236.5	-9.9
Neath	252	125	23	148	253.9	236.5	-6.9
Swansea	331	125	46	172	269.5	236.5	-12.3
Wales	268	125	11	136	236.5	236.5	-

Notes:**Average rate bill per hereditament**

The estimated contribution made by domestic ratepayers to authorities' rate fund expenditure, less domestic rate relief, divided by the number of hereditaments.

Community charge for spending at Grant Related Expenditure (GRE)

The community charge in each area if all authorities in that area spend at their GRE ie the assessment of their need to spend.

Overspend on GRE

The difference between expenditure and GRE expressed as an amount per adult in each area.

Community charge with no "safety net"

Calculated as the community charge for spending at GRE in each area plus any overspend or underspend per adult, without any allowance for safety nets envisaged in the Green Paper.

Actual rate poundage now

The actual non-domestic rate poundage in each area in 1987-88

National non-domestic rate poundage (NNDR)

The average poundage paid by non-domestic ratepayers based on the actual poundages and weighted by non-domestic rateable value.

Change to NNDR poundage

Percentage difference between national and actual non-domestic poundages.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister: Lords Lieutenant for England and Wales, the dates of their appointment and their period of office are:

Lords Lieutenant for England and Wales

Mr. Arnold asked the Prime Minister if she will list the Lords Lieutenant for England and Wales, the dates of their appointment and their period of office.

County	Lord-Lieutenant	Date of appointment	Date of retirement
<i>England</i>			
Avon	Sir John Wills, TD, FRICS, JP	April 1974	July 2003
Bedfordshire	Lt. Col. Hanmer Hanbury, LVO, MC, JP	March 1978	January 1991
Berkshire	Col. The Hon. Gordon Palmer, OBE, TD	January 1978	July 1993
Buckinghamshire	Commander The Hon. John Fremantle, RN (Retd.), JP	September 1984	January 2002
Cambridgeshire	Michael Bevan, Esquire	August 1985	August 2001
Cheshire	The Viscount Leverhulme, TD	August 1949	July 1990
Cleveland	The Lord Gisborough, TD	March 1981	July 2002
Cornwall	The Viscount Falmouth	October 1977	October 1994
Cumbria	Sir Charles Graham, Bt	February 1983	July 1994
Derbyshire	Col. Peter Hilton, MC, JP	January 1978	June 1994
Devon	The Earl of Morley, JP	May 1982	May 1998
Dorset	The Lord Digby, JP	September 1984	July 1999
Durham	The Lord Barnard, TD	August 1970	September 1998
East Sussex	The Most Hon. The Marquess of Abergavenny, KG, OBE, JP	April 1974	November 1989
Essex	Admiral Sir Andrew Lewis, KCB, JP	August 1978	January 1993
Gloucestershire	Col. Martin Gibbs, CB, DSO, TD, JP	June 1978	February 1992
Greater London	Field Marshal The Lord Bramall, GCB, OBE, MC, JP	January 1986	December 1998
Greater Manchester	Sir William Downward, JP	April 1974	December 1987
Hampshire	Sir James Scott, JP	December 1982	October 1999
Hereford and Worcester	Captain Thomas Dunne, JP	1977	October 2008

County	Lord-Lieutenant	Date of appointment	Date of retirement
Hertfordshire	Simon Bowes Lyon, Esquire, FCA	January 1986	June 2007
Humberside	Richard Bethell, Esquire	October 1983	March 1997
Isle of Wight	The Lord Mottistone, CBE	August 1985	December 1995
Kent	The Rt. Hon. Robin Leigh-Pemberton	August 1982	January 2002
Lancashire	Dr. Simon Towneley	March 1976	December 1996
Leicestershire	Col. Robert Martin, OBE, JP	May 1965	April 1989
Lincolnshire	Henry Nevile, Esquire	November 1975	March 1995
Merseyside	Wing Cdr. Kenneth Stoddart, JP	April 1979	May 1989
Norfolk	Timothy Colman, Esquire	March 1978	September 2004
Northamptonshire	John Lowther, Esquire, CBE, JP	January 1984	November 1998
Northumberland	The Viscount Ridley, TD	January 1984	July 2000
North Yorkshire	Sir Marcus Worsley, JP	March 1987	April 2000
Nottinghamshire	Sir Gordon Hobday	January 1983	February 1991
Oxfordshire	Sir Ashley Ponsonby, MC	January 1980	February 1996
Shropshire	John Dugdale, Esquire	February 1975	May 1998
Somerset	Lt. Col. Geoffrey Luttrell, MC, JP	March 1978	October 1994
South Yorkshire	Hugh Neill, Esquire, CBE, TD, JP	1985	March 1996
Staffordshire	Sir Arthur Bryan	July 1968	March 1998
Suffolk	Sir Joshua Rowley, JP	March 1978	December 1995
Surrey	Richard Thornton, Esquire, OBE, JP	May 1986	October 1997
Tyne and Wear	Sir Ralph Carr-Ellison	July 1984	December 2000
Warwickshire	Charles Smith-Ryland, Esquire	December 1967	May 2002
West Midlands	The Earl of Aylesford, JP	April 1974	November 1993
West Sussex	Her Grace Lavinia, Duchess of Norfolk, CBE	April 1975	March 1991
West Yorkshire	The Lord Ingrow, OBE, TD, JP	May 1985	August 1992
Wiltshire	Col. Sir Hugh Brassey, KCVO, OBE, MC	December 1981	October 1990
<i>Wales</i>			
Clwyd	Sir William Gladstone, Bt, JP	August 1985	October 2000
Dyfed	Mr. David Mansel Lewis, JP	February 1979	October 2002
Glamorgan			
Mid	Mr. Douglas Badham, CBE, JP	December 1985	August 1989
South	Mrs. Susan Williams, MBE	December 1985	August 1990
West	Col. Vaughan Williams, DSO, OBE, TD	December 1985	October 1987
Gwynedd	The Marquess of Anglesey	October 1983	October 1997
Gwent	Mr. Richard Hanbury-Tenison, JP	June 1979	January 2000
Powys	Mr. Mervyn Bourdillon, JP	July 1986	August 1999

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Mr. Gardiner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to take steps to ease the cash flow problems caused for many companies whose value added tax refunds are held up by the Civil Service strike; and whether he will allow them to use their monthly pay-as-you-earn payments to the Inland Revenue to make good the shortfall.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Married Couples (Tax Allowances)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Government's plans to reform the system of tax allowances available to married couples.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I announced in the Budget debate that the Government would not be going ahead at this stage with the system of independent taxation with transferable tax allowances discussed in last year's Green Paper "The Reform of Personal Taxation". We are now considering whether there is a satisfactory halfway house to the approach in the Green Paper.

EC Budget Council

Mr. Knox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will report on the outcome of the European Community Budget Council held in Brussels on 2 July.

Mr. Brooke: The Budget Council considered the Community's budgetary problems in the current year in the light of the Commission's proposals for a supplementary and amending budget and the conclusions agreed by the European Council on 29-30 June. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council noted that the European Council's conclusions implied that the full amount of the prospective overspend in agricultural guarantee expenditure this year should be offset by adjusting the system for advance payments from the Community budget to member states for this expenditure. The Commission is expected to make specific proposals shortly for discussion in the Agriculture Council on 13-14 July.

The Council then proceeded after long deliberation to establish, subject to a waiting reserve by the Dutch delegation, a draft supplementary and amending Budget to cover the rest of the deficit in the current year as projected by the Commission amounting to some 2,100 mecu (Some £1.5 billion). The Council's proposals have five principal components.

First, the unused margin of VAT within this year's 1.4 per cent. ceiling, some 627 mecu net of Spanish and Portuguese refunds, would be called up. Second, savings

of 198 mecu would be made in obligatory expenditure programmes, in particular agricultural guidance, fisheries, food aid and Mediterranean financial protocols.

Third, the refunds of 10 per cent. of levies and duties made to member states to cover collection costs would be delayed from the latter part of this year until early next year to the extent necessary to save 400 mecu this year. The member states agreed that these payments should be delayed on a voluntary basis, if necessary, pending amendment of the relevant Council Regulation, 2891/77.

Fourth, the 1987 instalments of the repayment to member states of the 1984 inter-governmental agreement would be deferred, saving 257 mecu in the current year.

Fifth, the Commission's revenue projections would be increased by 651 mecu to reflect more recent estimates of revenue and expected underspends on credits in the 1987 budget and carried forward from 1986. The Council agreed that, if the adjustments to the Commission's earlier revenue projections should prove excessive, the 1984 IGA repayment instalments due in 1988 could likewise be deferred as necessary.

Provided that the Dutch delegation lifts its waiting reserve, the Council's proposals will be submitted to the European Parliament today. The Parliament is expected to consider them during its plenary session next week.

Finance Bill

Mr. Gow asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if notes on clauses to the Finance Bill will be made available to hon. Members.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Yes. The notes on clauses were placed in the Vote Office earlier today.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inner City Task Forces

Mr. Allen asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster why the inner city task forces have not spent up to their full annual budgets.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No single task force has been given a specific annual budget. The eight original task forces committed around £5 million out of their own funds on local projects of benefit to their areas in 1986-87. This spending generated the commitment of substantial additional funds from other Government, public sector and private sector sources. Five million pounds is around 70 per cent. of the maximum task force funds available for project expenditure in that year. It took time to set the task forces up and it also took time to find useful local projects to support. Most task forces did not become fully operational until the early summer of 1986. The rate of spending in future either directly out of task force funds or out of other Government programmes in task force areas will depend on the response of local business and residents to our efforts to encourage worthwhile projects.

Upholstered Domestic Furniture

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to publish the consultation document on the code of practice on match ignitability of components of upholstery of domestic furniture.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) on 1 July at column 91.

ENERGY

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Ms. Ruddock asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the sale of the REFEL plant at Springfields by British Nuclear Fuels plc to Turner and Newall Ltd. for £1.25 million; and whether British Nuclear Fuels plc has any further plans to sell off any of its other operations to private companies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The REFEL plant at Springfields makes silicon carbide products, and is not central to BNFL's nuclear business. I am informed by the company that it decided to sell the plant in order to concentrate more fully on commercial activities vital to continued success. There will be no redundancies as a result of the sale. BNFL has no further plans to sell off any of its other operations to private companies.

Electricity Industry

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether there has been any change in the external financing limit for 1987-88 of the electricity industry in England and Wales since that announced in the 1987 public expenditure White Paper, Cm. 56-II.

Mr. Parkinson: The external finance limit for the electricity supply industry (England and Wales) for 1987-88 was set in the public expenditure plans at -£1,305 million. The Government have agreed with the Industry a revised limit of -£1,203 million to take account of capital expenditure which the Central Electricity Generating Board expects to incur in 1987-88 in relation to Sizewell B, now that consent to construct has been granted. The increase of £102 million will be charged to the reserve and so will not add to the public expenditure planning totals. It reflects expenditure which the board will incur in 1987-88 rather than in later years as a result of the timing of consent. This rephasing will not add to the overall cost of the project.

British Coal Corporation

Mr. Aspinwall asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether the terms of the assurance about Government financial support for the British Coal Corporation given by his predecessor in an answer on 2 July 1986, *Official Report*, column 553, to the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins), apply to 1987-88 also.

Mr. Parkinson: Further weakening in the market has continued to put pressure on British Coal's financial position. Nevertheless British Coal still aims to achieve the objective agreed with Government of breaking even for the year 1988-89 as a whole and thereafter generating an increasing surplus on revenue account.

Although I anticipate that this assurance should not be required indefinitely, I can confirm that, subject to Parliament's approving the necessary provisions, the Government will continue to make available funds to enable the corporation to meet its obligations as they fall due during the current financial year to 26 March 1988.

TRANSPORT

Stray Dogs (Road Accidents)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates there are, for the last year for which figures are available, of the number of road accidents caused by stray dogs; how many people were injured as a result; and how many people were killed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The "Stats 19" road accident report form does not record the causes of accidents.

Information is available for personal injury accidents in Great Britain where a dog was present on the carriageway. In 1985 there were 1,221 such accidents, in which three people were killed and 1,458 were injured.

London Docklands Light Railway City Extension

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has made, or obtained, of the construction costs of the London docklands light railway City extension and the additional costs incurred by consequential upgrading of that part of the railway due to be opened on 30 July.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport's latest budgeted cost for the project is around £135 million at outturn prices. This includes the cost of upgrading works to the Initial railway which are necessary for the effective operation of the City extension.

Cross-Channel Ferries

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the regulations with which an operator is required to conform in operating a cross-Channel ferry.

Mr. David Mitchell: Operators of cross-channel ferries have to comply with those regulations, contained in international conventions, applicable to passenger ships engaged on short international voyages (that is, international voyages in the course of which a ship is not more than 200 miles from a port or place in which the passengers and crew could be placed in safety).

The principal international conventions relating to safety include—

The 1974 Solas Convention and the 1978 protocol relating thereto incorporating the 1981 and 1983 amendments.

The relevant chapters are:—

Chapter I — General Provisions

Chapter II-1 — Construction — Subdivision and stability, machinery and electrical installations.

Chapter II-2 — Construction — Fire protection, fire detection and fire extinction

Chapter III — Life-saving appliances and arrangements

Chapter IV — Radio and radiotelephony

Chapter V — Safety of navigation

Chapter VII — Carriage of dangerous goods;

The International Convention on Load Lines, 1966;

The Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 and the 1981 amendments relating thereto;

The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978.

The requirements of these international conventions are normally incorporated in the national legislation of the flag state administration. For the United Kingdom, the principal statutory instruments relating to safe operation of cross-channel ferries are:

Title of Merchant Shipping Statutory Instrument		S.I. number(s)
MS	(Certification of Deck Officers) Regulations	1985/1306
MS	(Certification of Marine Engineer Officers) Regulations	1980/2025
MS	(Certification of Competency as AB) Regulations	1970/ 294
MS	(Official Log Books) Regulations	1981/ 569
MS	(Official Log Books) (Amendment) Regulations	1985/1828
MS	(Medical Examination) (Amendment) Regulations	1985/ 512
MS	(Dangerous Goods) Regulations	1981/1747
MS	(Dangerous Goods) (Amendment) Regulations	1986/1069
MS	(Life-Saving Appliances) Regulations	1980/ 538
MS	(Life-Saving Appliances) (Amendment) Regulations	1986/1066
MS	(Musters and Training) Regulations	1981/ 577
MS	(Musters) (Amendment) Regulations	1986/1071
MS	(Passenger Ship Classification) Regulations	1981/ 578
MS	(Fire Appliances) Regulations	1981/1472
MS	(Fire Appliances) (Amendment) Regulations	1980/ 544
MS	(Fire Protection) Regulations	1985/1194
MS	(Fire Protection) (Amendment) Regulations	1981/ 574
MS	(Fire Protection and Fire Appliances) (Amendment) Regulations	1984/1218
MS	(Load Line) Rules	1985/1218
MS	(Carriage of Nautical Publications) Rules	1985/1193
MS	(Signals of Distress) Rules	1986/1070
MS	(Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations	1968/1053
MS	(Automatic Pilot and Testing of Steering Gear) Regulations	1975/ 700
MS	(Code of Safe Working Practices) Regulations	1977/1010
MS	(Means of Access) Regulations	1983/ 708
MS	(Safety Officials and Reporting of Accident and Dangerous Occurrences) Regulations	1981/ 571
MS	(Safety Officials and Reporting of Accident and Dangerous Occurrences) (Amendment) Regulations	1980/ 686
MS	(Health and Safety: General Duties) Regulations	1981/1729
MS	(Radio Installations) Regulations	1982/ 876
MS	(Radio Installations) (Amendment) Regulations	1984/ 93
MS	(Radio Installations Survey) Regulations	1984/ 408
MS	(Passenger Ship Construction) Regulations	1980/ 529
MS	(Passenger Ship Construction) (Amendment) Regulations	1981/ 582
MS	(Passenger Ship Construction and Survey) Regulations	1984/ 346
MS	(Application of Construction and Survey Regulations to Other Ships) Regulations	1984/1223
MS	(Passenger Ship Construction) (New and Existing Ships) (Amendment) Regulations	1985/1216
MS	(Closing of Openings in Hulls and in Watertight Bulkheads) Regulations	1986/1075
MS	(Navigational Equipment) Regulations	1980/ 530
MS	(Navigational Equipment) (Amendment) Regulations	1984/1203
MS	(Radio Installations Survey) Regulations	1981/ 579
MS	(Radio Installations Survey) Regulations	1985/ 659
MS	(Radio Installations Survey) Regulations	1981/ 583
MS	(Passenger Ship Construction) Regulations	1970/1453
MS	(Passenger Ship Construction) (Amendment) Regulations	1980/ 535
MS	(Passenger Ship Construction) (Amendment) Regulations	1981/ 580
MS	(Passenger Ship Construction and Survey) Regulations	1985/ 660
MS	(Application of Construction and Survey Regulations to Other Ships) Regulations	1984/1216
MS	(Passenger Ship Construction) (New and Existing Ships) (Amendment) Regulations	1985/ 661
MS	(Closing of Openings in Hulls and in Watertight Bulkheads) Regulations	1986/1074
MS	(Closing of Openings in Hulls and in Watertight Bulkheads) Regulations	1980/ 540

THE ARTS

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Minister for the Arts what is his best estimate of the total number of people attending museums and galleries in the United Kingdom in 1986.

Mr. Luce: The information collected by the Museum Association suggests that some 73 million visits were made to museums and galleries in the United Kingdom in 1986.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Department Houses (Isle of Wight)

Mr. Barry Field asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of vacant prison officers' houses, flats and dwellings on the Isle of Wight that are not required for future use; and what steps are being taken to dispose of those that are surplus to requirements.

Mr. John Patten: Approximately 60 prison officers' houses on the Isle of Wight are vacant, of which nine are in process of being sold on the open market. The need to retain the remainder will be reviewed and any which can be declared surplus will be sold on the open market or to prison officers under a newly introduced discount sales scheme.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe the new uses of the personal data that will result from a new police national computer; what additional indexes will be linked together; what is the anticipated access rates and performance of each index; and when he estimates that the new police national computer will be fully operational.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Plans for a replacement police national computer have not yet been finalised. We hope to make an announcement later this year.

Flammable Domestic Material

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the number of (a) fires in dwellings due to the ignition of upholstery covers, (b) non-fatal casualties from such fires and (c) fatalities from such fires, separately for each year from 1980 to 1985, giving estimates where appropriate; and if he will give the same information under the same headings in relation to bedding.

Mr. Hurd: "Fire Statistics United Kingdom", published annually contains information on fires in dwellings attended by local authority fire brigades in which the material first ignited was upholstery or covers, or bedding. This information is in tables 27, 28, 32, 33 and 35, respectively, of the annual volumes for 1980 to 1984. Publication of 1985 information has been delayed by computer processing problems but provisional figures are:

Materials first ignited

	Upholstery or covers	Bedding
Fires	3,934	4,844
Non-fatal casualties	1,186	1,044
Fatal casualties	167	129

Sweden (Drug Trafficking)

Mr. Gorst asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information has been sought from

the relevant United Kingdom authorities by the Swedish authorities involved in the case of Captain Simon Hayward as to whether a British subject, Mr. Gary Forbes Mitchell, recently convicted in Sweden of drug trafficking offences, had any previous convictions for similar or other offences in the United Kingdom; what reply was given to the Swedish inquiries; and if he will make a statement;

(2) for what reasons two British police officers travelled to Sweden to interview Captain Simon Hayward, currently being held in custody by the Swedish authorities; what was the outcome of their visit; whether the officers went at the invitation of the Swedish authorities; whether they questioned or made inquiries into other British subjects while they were in Sweden; whether the Swedish authorities made any contribution to the cost of their journey; and what was the total cost to the United Kingdom taxpayer.

Mr. Hurd: It is not in the public interest to comment on whether information has been exchanged through Interpol nor on the reasons for or outcome of the visit to Sweden made by two British police officers. Their visit was made with the agreement of the Swedish authorities who did not contribute to the cost. The total additional cost of the visit was approximately £1,100.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Alarm Systems (Elderly and Infirm Persons)

Mr. Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will withdraw the draft regulations under the Social Security Act which provide that the cost of alarm systems for the elderly or infirm will no longer be eligible for housing benefit.

Mr. Portillo: The draft regulations for the reformed housing benefits scheme to be introduced in April 1988 provide, in line with current policy, that the cost of alarm systems installed in accommodation specifically intended for elderly, sick or disabled people will be eligible for housing benefit.

Women

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the main needs of women in the policy areas within the sphere of his Department's activities; what has been done to identify and quantify these needs and to monitor services delivery; what consultation is carried out with women to ensure their views are adequately represented; and what training is given to his staff to raise their appreciation of the needs of women.

Mrs. Currie: Our policies on health, personal social services and social security are designed to benefit both men and women.

The particular needs of women are recognised and there have been many specific initiatives designed to benefit them. The maternity services advisory committee, established in 1981, produced three reports on aspects of maternity care, which have been distributed widely within the health service and to interested professional and lay organisations. The committee's advice is taken into account when authorities plan, monitor and review their maternity services. The Asian mother and baby project was launched in 1984 and involved the appointment of link

workers to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers and so improve ante and post-natal care for women from the Indian sub-continent.

Health authorities have been required to install computerised call and recall schemes for cervical cancer and we are introducing the first nation-wide breast cancer screening system in the world.

Particular attention has been paid to women smokers. In 1985 £1 million was made available to the Health Education Council for a television campaign to discourage smoking among women. The Health Education Council also produced a booklet on women and smoking in late 1986. The latest voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising and promotion prohibits cigarette advertising in magazines where a third or more of the readers are young women, and one of the six new health warnings draws attention to the damage smoking during pregnancy can do to an unborn baby. Although there is considerable work still to be done, smoking amongst women has fallen from 37 per cent. in 1978 to 32 per cent. in 1984.

The Health Education Authority, which succeeded the HEC in April 1987 and is largely funded by Government, produces a range of publications aimed specifically at women. The "Pregnancy Book," first published in 1984 by the Health Education Council, received a particularly warm welcome. The Government expect that the Health Education Authority will continue and develop this work.

In the social security field, the Department is conscious both of the need to ensure equal treatment between men and women and of the special needs and problems of many women. Equal treatment for men and women in claiming benefits has been extended to almost all aspects of the social security system: where differences remain, they are largely favourable to women. In respect of special needs, a major recent initiative has been the introduction of statutory maternity pay from April 1987 to combine maternity allowance and maternity pay. In addition, those women who do not qualify for SMP may still continue to receive maternity allowance under new conditions designed to target help more closely on those with recent work records. The new arrangements in both cases give pregnant women greater choice about when to give up work without affecting benefit entitlement. Among the reforms of income related benefits which come into effect in April 1988 the introduction of a lone parent premium in income support will be one of the changes of particular benefit to many women. Like other aspects of the social security reforms affecting both men and women the new arrangements will be carefully monitored.

Since October last year I have held a special responsibility for women's health. I have called together a small group of officials to look at the range of issues covered by the Department that affect women's health and to gather information on such issues.

My ministerial colleagues and I meet many women's groups and organisations, with interests across the whole spectrum of departmental responsibilities, during the course of our duties. Where issues or policy developments of specific interest to women are under consideration we consult a wide range of interested organisations. The Department also gives funding to a number of voluntary bodies dealing with issues of specific interest to women such as the women's national cancer control campaign and the women's therapy centre, and contact with these groups helps to keep us informed of women's needs.

I am the departmental representative on the ministerial group on women's issues, which provides a formal channel for contact with the Women's National Commission. This Department contributed fully to the recently published review of the United Nations forward looking strategies for women, which was co-ordinated by the ministerial group.

The Department is an equal opportunities employer and has adopted a programme of action in support of this policy. Included in these provisions is a wide range of equal opportunities awareness training which emphasises an appreciation of the needs of women employed within the DHSS.

Cervical Cancer Call and Recall Schemes

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities have in operation cervical cancer call and recall schemes covering all women at risk.

Mrs. Currie: Cervical cancer screening for women at risk is routinely offered by all health authorities. Many have had their own call and recall system operating for many years on computer or manually.

On 29 April 1985 we asked all health authorities to ensure that computerised call and recall systems were installed. At that time our guidance to health authorities was that they should give priority to women aged between 35-64. To date, 75 health authorities have a computerised system installed and in use.

In February this year we asked health authorities to rationalise their existing arrangements for screening younger women by ensuring that call and recall began at age 20. Nineteen of the 75 who already have computerised systems have now met this requirement. We have told all health authorities that we expect them to meet all our requirements by the target date of 31 March 1988.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of exceptionally severe weather payments.

Mr. Scott: We are currently reviewing the exceptionally cold weather provision in the light of last winter's experience.

Registered Mental Nurses

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many registered mental nurses are employed in each district health authority; what was the number in 1979; and what has been the percentage change.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have as much information as is available as soon as possible.

Benefits

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the Leeds, Central constituency are currently in receipt of (a) supplementary benefit, (b) invalidity benefit, (c) housing benefit, (d) sickness benefit, (e) mobility allowance and (f) maternity benefits; and how many people have received single payments in the current financial year.

Mr. Portillo: The Leeds, Central constituency is covered by the Department's local offices at Leeds, east, north, and north-west, but the boundaries are not conterminous. The table shows the number of people receiving benefit from those offices on the latest date for which information is available:

	At 5 May 1987	At 2 June 1987
Supplementary Benefit	149,476	—
Invalidity and Sickness Benefit	—	9,640
Maternity Allowance	—	719

¹ Source 100 per cent. count of cases of action.

In the period from 8 April 1987 to 5 May 1987 there have been 3,582 awards of single payments.

I regret that information about mobility allowance is not available and that the only information on housing benefit relates to the entire Leeds city council area, and cannot be disaggregated by constituency.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to lay claims and payments regulations covering all social security benefits.

Mr. Scott: Copies of draft Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations on claims for and payments of all social security benefits are today being placed in the Library. They set out the common rules which the Government intend will operate from the start of the income support and family credit schemes in April 1988. The draft regulations are being made available to assist preparations for the implementation of the schemes and will be laid before Parliament when final decisions have been taken on the income-related benefit rates in the autumn.

The regulations which harmonise and simplify many of the existing rules governing benefit claims and payments introduce several new rules, one of which will limit to one month the period during which benefit can be suspended while the adjudication officer is deciding whether to appeal from a decision of the social security appeal tribunal. A further proposed change is that when the adjudication officer decides that payments on behalf of someone in receipt of income support may be made to a third party for housing costs, fuel costs and water charges, deductions may be made from a range of contributory and non-contributory benefits.

The revised time limits for claiming benefits recommended in the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee in March 1987 (Cm 100) have been incorporated in the regulations and in themselves introduce a considerable simplification in the administration of the social security benefits system.

Cancer Screening

46. Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the professional standards of private sector companies offering breast cancer screening.

Mrs. Currie [pursuant to her reply, 30 June 1987, c. 70]: We have received three letters on this subject.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Plastic Bullets

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons have been (a) killed and (b) injured by plastic bullets in the Province at the latest available date.

Mr. Stanley: Since the introduction of rubber baton rounds in 1970, and plastic baton rounds in 1973, 15 people have died as a result of their use by the security forces in Northern Ireland. From 17 March 1981, when records were first collated, to 31 May 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, 383 people are recorded as having been injured by them.

Education (Costs)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the comparative cost of educating (a) a YTP student, (b) a BTEC student and (c) a GCE O-level student in Northern Ireland's further education colleges; and if these courses have been the subject of discussion between the Northern Ireland Office and the Government of the Republic of Ireland at a meeting of the Anglo-Irish Ministerial Conference.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall reply to the right hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Schemes

Mr. John Evans asked the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he will be introducing to increase the quality of the educational content of Government training schemes.

Mr. Cope: Training schemes run by the Manpower Services Commission are primarily designed to give people the competence to compete effectively in the labour market. Most schemes also provide opportunities for trainees to gain recognised vocational qualifications. A training standards advisory service has been established to provide independent quality audits of both youth and adult training schemes. Also, the MSC requires all providers of YTS training to become approved training organisations and there are proposals to extend this requirement to the new job training scheme. These measures are designed to improve the quality of training opportunities for young people and adults.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people, by sex, have been unemployed in the Leeds, Central constituency for (a) less than six months, (b) between six months and one year, (c) between one year and two years and (d) more than two years; and what were the figures for 1986.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library.

Unemployed claimants—Leeds Central constituency

	10 April 1986		11 April 1987	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Unemployed for under 6 months	1,864	803	1,694	686

	10 April 1986		11 April 1987	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
6 months—1 year	1,028	433	933	387
1—2 years	966	320	938	322
Over 2 years	1,942	445	1,800	432

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of people unemployed in the Leeds central constituency, by sex, who are (a) under 25 years of age, (b) 25 to 35 years, (c) 35 to 50 years and (d) over 50 years; and what were the numbers in 1986.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library.

Unemployed claimants—Leeds Central constituency

	10 April 1986		11 April 1987	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Aged under 25	1,867	1,001	1,652	872
Aged 25—34	1,507	377	1,402	365
Aged 35—49	1,392	357	1,321	324
Aged over 50	1,034	266	990	266

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the Leeds, West constituency at 1 January for each year between 1979 and 1986 had been unemployed for (a) less than six months, (b) between six months and one year, (c) between one and two years and (d) over two years.

Unemployed Claimants—Leeds West Constituency

	12 January 1984		10 January 1985		9 January 1986	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Aged under 25	1,355	840	1,488	804	1,454	847
Aged 25—34	1,009	299	1,106	364	1,133	380
Aged 35—49	923	243	992	263	1,010	306
Aged over 50	753	214	764	241	751	265

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Wright

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his discussions with the United States Government about the publication of Peter Wright's memoirs.

Mr. Mellor Our discussions with other Governments are confidential.

Women

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the main needs of women in the policy areas within the sphere of his Department's activities; what has been done to identify and quantify these needs and to monitor services delivery; what consultation is carried out with women to ensure their views are adequately represented; and what training is given to his staff to raise their appreciation of the needs of women.

Mr. Eggar The main needs of women throughout the world are set out in the forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women adopted by the world conference at Nairobi in July 1985 to review and appraise the

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information, which is also in the Library. Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the new ward-based system, and are available only from June 1983. Figures are given for the date closest to 1 January for each year for which figures are available.

Unemployed Claimants—Leeds West Constituency

	12 January 1984	10 January 1985	9 January 1986
Unemployed for under 6 months	2,231	2,486	2,494
6 months—1 Year	1,087	1,000	1,020
1—2 Years	1,094	1,011	985
Over 2 Years	1,224	1,525	1,647

Mr. Battle asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of people unemployed in the Leeds, West constituency by sex, who were (a) under 25 years of age, (b) between 25 years and 35 years, (c) between 35 and 50 years and (d) over 50 years, respectively at 1 January for each year between 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information, which is also in the Library. Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the new ward-based system, and are available only from June 1983. Figures are given for the date closest to 1 January for each year for which figures are available.

achievements of the United Nations decade for women. Implementation of the strategies is being monitored by the UN Secretariat and the commission on the status of women.

Women are both agents and beneficiaries of our aid programme and their needs are taken into account in drawing up and reviewing expenditure programmes. Aid wing officials hold regular discussions with members of the women's organisations interest group of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and other women in development experts.

Guidance on equal opportunities is a regular part of the Department's internal training. Aid wing staff also receive training in the role of women in development.

Western Sahara

Mr. Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of his Department in relation to the self determination of the occupants of the western Sahara.

Mr. Mellor We fully support efforts currently being made by the United Nations Secretary General to bring about a peaceful solution to the western Sahara dispute which takes account of the views of the people of the territory.

Cameroons

Mr. Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by him to the Government of the Cameroons about human rights.

Mrs. Chalker: We have made no recent representations to the Government of Cameroons about human rights.

Cyprus

Sir Peter Blaker asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Cyprus.

Mrs. Chalker: There has been no change in Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Cyprus. We recognise only the Republic of Cyprus, of which President Kyprianou is the Head of State. We do not recognise the self-styled "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus".

ENVIRONMENT

Conservation

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the United Kingdom's next report to the European Commission detailing observance of European Community directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds will catalogue the loss and damage to annex 1 bird species and migratory bird species due to afforestation in the Caithness and Sutherland flow country.

Mr. Ridley: I am well aware of criticisms which have been expressed of the possible effect on the population of some bird species of afforestation in the Caithness and Sutherland peat lands. The Government are urgently considering ways of ensuring that an appropriate balance between conservation and other land uses is achieved. The United Kingdom will, in accordance with Article 12 of Directive 79/409/EEC be reporting in appropriate terms on the general implementation of national provisions taken under the Directive.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* all compulsory purchase notices issued by the London Docklands Development Corporation showing for each the area of land, the projected use of the land, the costs to the corporation where purchase has been completed and the number of those employed who are or have been subject to displacement.

Mr. Trippier: The following table lists the compulsory purchase orders made by the London Docklands Development Corporation, the area of land affected (some of which is the subject of more than one CPO) and the regeneration purpose of acquisition. The remaining information is not readily available but I will write to the hon. Member shortly with more details:

Compulsory Purchase Orders

<i>CPO Title</i>	<i>Approx Area of land affected (hectares)</i>	<i>Purpose for which CPO made</i>
1. Connaught Crossing	5.96	Highway scheme
2. East Docklands No 1	301	Land assembly for redevelopment
3. East Docklands No. 2	5.3	Land assembly for redevelopment
4. Greenland Dock (East Country Yard)	2.6	Land assembly for redevelopment
5. Isthmus Site	2.54	Highway scheme and redevelopment
6. Cannon Workshops Phase II	1.43	Land assembly for redevelopment and highway purposes
7. Garford Street	0.53	Land assembly for redevelopment
8. Leslie's Cafe (95 Prestons Road and 51 Coldharbour)	0.06	Highway scheme
9. Westferry Road-Emmett Street	9.12	Highway scheme and redevelopment
10. Naval Row	0.7	Land assembly for redevelopment
11. Westferry Circus	6.13	Highway scheme
12. Shed 35 Link	0.85	Highway scheme
13. Billingsgate-Prestons Road	6.1	Highway scheme
14. Lower Lea Crossing	16.06	Highway scheme
15. 270-286 Poplar High Street	0.13	Highway scheme
16. Isthmus Site ²	0.85	Highway scheme
17. Phase 6	2.7	Highway scheme
18. Eastern Gateway Access Road	20.6	Highway scheme
19. Brunswick Wharf	7.65	Land assembly for redevelopment
20. Klein's Wharf	0.72	Land assembly for redevelopment
21. Land to the east of West India Dock Road to the South of Marsh Wall/Market	0.79	Car parking for adjacent development
22. Johnsons Draw Dock	0.07	Public open space-slipway

Tower Hamlets and Newham (Road Traffic)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the traffic levels expected on the projected east-west main road in

Tower Hamlets and Newham in the London docklands; what are the estimated costs of each of its sections, crossings or tunnels; and what status it will be accorded.

Mr. Trippier: The LDDC currently estimates that, by the year 2000, the traffic flows on the busiest section of the

network, which is in Tower Hamlets, would be about 7,000 vehicles two-way in the peak hour. The equivalent figure for Newham is about 4,000 vehicles.

The total construction cost (excluding land) for the LDDC's road programme is £188 million at March 1986 prices. The major schemes are as follows:

Scheme	Cost £ million
Limehouse Link Cut and Cover	40
Poplar Link and Connecting tunnel	26
Lower Lea Road Crossing	20
Connaught Crossing	21
Royal Albert Dock Spine Road	20
Eastern Gateway Access Road	14

No decisions have yet been taken on the final status of each section.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the main headings of gross expenditure of the London Docklands Development Corporation to date including land acquisition, publicity, consultancy, administration and local community grants, together with offsetting income from each principal source and his reasons for seeking to increase borrowing powers from £600 million to £800 million.

Mr. Trippier: LDDC's expenditure and receipts to 31 March 1987 are set out below. Further details will be available in the corporation's annual report and accounts 1986-87, which will be laid before the House before the recess.

	£ million
<i>Gross Expenditure to 31 March 1987</i>	
Land Acquisition	79
Reclamation and Treatment	78
Other infrastructure	128
Community and Local Industry Support	19
Administration	27
Estate Management	12
Promotion and General Consultancy	14
Interest and Taxation	16
Total Expenditure	373
<i>Income</i>	
Disposal Income	58
Other Income	10
Total Income	68
Net Expenditure	305

A sum close to the present financial limit for urban development corporations of £600 million will be reached by 31 March 1988. It is therefore necessary to raise the limit provided for by statute before Estimates for 1988-89 can be presented.

Newham (Inner Area Programme)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now publish his decision concerning the application of the London borough of Newham of December 1986 in respect of the inner area programme for the financial year 1987-88.

Mr. Trippier: I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

Pension Schemes

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will take steps to provide further protection to beneficiaries of local authority pension schemes against trustees who invest the funds of pension schemes into investments involving undue risk; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will issue advice to local authorities about the investment of their pension funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Council Tenants

Mr. Harry Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to make it illegal for councils to evict tenants solely on the basis of allegations of racist behaviour; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Local authorities do not have powers to evict tenants solely on the basis of allegations of racist behaviour. Councils which have been concerned about cases of racial harassment have sought possession orders on grounds laid down in the Housing Act 1985: Ground 1 (breach of tenancy obligations) and Ground 2 (nuisance and annoyance to neighbours). Before granting possession orders, the courts need to be satisfied that the requirements of either ground have been met.

Tin Mines (Uranium)

Mr. Matthew Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the derelict tin mines in Cornwall where mine spoil has elevated uranium concentrations.

Mr. Moynihan: Full information on all sites is not readily available, but it is likely that the uranium concentrations of tin-mine spoils will generally be higher than that for other earth materials in the United Kingdom.

Radon Gas

Mr. Matthew Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has budgeted for the provision of funds to schools that are found to contain a high level of radon gas within the next year.

Mr. Moynihan: Investigations of radon levels in schools are being undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board for the Cornwall county council, and the question of undertaking any remedial measures would be a matter for the County Council. Funds are not normally made available by central Government specifically for local authority remedial work to deal with particular problems, but rate support grant is paid in general support of local authorities' revenue expenditure. It is for the local authorities to decide their individual spending priorities.

Mr. Matthew Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when action will be taken on the 10 schools in Cornwall and Cornwall college at Pool which are above the recommended eventual action threshold for radon gas presence.

Mr. Moynihan: Cornwall county council, with the help of other agencies, will be investigating methods of

reducing radon levels in six schools during the summer holidays. The results of this work will provide the council with a basis for deciding upon any further work.

Mr. Matthew Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when is the recommended action to remove radon gas from a house if it is found to be above the recommended level; and what is his estimate of how much this action would cost the average household.

Mr. Moynihan: It is too early to give specific advice on appropriate remedial measures or their costs. The Building Research Establishment is carrying out a programme of research on remedial and preventive measures, and further guidance and advice will be given in the light of this research.

Mr. Matthew Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the level of millisieverts of radon gas doses found in each school in the constituency of Truro.

Mr. Moynihan: This is a matter for Cornwall county council, for whom the National Radiological Protection Board have measured the average concentration of radon in selected schools, including a number in the Truro constituency.

SCOTLAND

Agricultural Advisory Service

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the agricultural advisory service in Scotland giving the number of advisers in each speciality and in each area of Scotland in 1983 and 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following the reorganisation of the separate colleges into Scottish agricultural colleges, the structure of the advisory services formerly operated by each college has changed radically. For this reason it is difficult to make direct comparisons. The numbers of field advisers at June 1983 compared with the same month in 1987 are as follows:

	1983	1987
East of Scotland College of Agriculture	24	18
North of Scotland College of Agriculture	38	30
West of Scotland Agricultural College	34	21
Totals	96	69

* Individual entitlements to housing support grant
(prices current at time of payment)

Area	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Scotland	213,400,000	228,200,000	161,900,000	104,632,870	72,135,479	67,211,241	64,178,219	44,449,760	46,489,693
Berwickshire	1,304,502	1,306,875	1,038,356	686,226	648,884	488,805	446,429	201,135	261,235
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,725,856	1,753,749	1,154,679	552,583	373,620	107,262	0	0	0
Roxburgh	1,734,338	1,971,598	1,537,295	1,165,695	1,260,321	1,285,796	1,306,156	951,730	1,225,127
Tweddale	289,209	285,768	109,055	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clackmannan	1,850,234	1,818,745	1,263,981	689,627	45,621	0	0	0	0
Falkirk	7,957,349	7,479,143	4,438,554	1,494,309	0	0	0	0	0
Stirling	1,929,781	1,916,151	1,016,962	1,355,195	20,431	0	0	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,094,232	1,452,108	1,272,965	1,387,048	1,574,069	1,673,013	1,759,580	1,382,490	1,432,469
Nithdale	3,147,826	905,200	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stewartry	548,774	676,321	542,539	412,797	414,643	359,095	343,480	253,704	425,965
Wigtown	1,046,584	1,154,830	767,726	452,325	255,317	200,315	95,565	0	121,604
Dunfermline	5,391,353	6,079,270	2,800,067	683,115	0	0	0	0	0
Kirkcaldy	6,303,279	6,500,216	3,077,166	696,260	0	0	0	0	0
North East Fife	1,586,114	1,664,141	979,528	829,197	369,583	87,427	0	0	0
Aberdeen	9,749,391	10,733,105	9,533,966	7,069,761	3,724,702	3,053,523	2,260,303	0	0
Banff and Buchan	4,966,010	5,495,862	4,343,622	3,306,069	2,437,296	1,943,394	1,599,685	558,241	794,646

The numbers of specialist advisers available across the whole of Scotland, by each specialism, are as follows:

Specialist Area	1983	1987
Crops	55	46
Animals	91	68
Mechanisation and buildings	40	33
Soils	16	10
Farm Management	13	11
Economics	38	29
Horticulture	30	22
Veterinary Services	32	21
Totals	315	240

In addition to their specialist advisory work, the College staff also has teaching and R and D responsibilities under the Scottish system.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the numbers employed in Scotland for each year since 1979 and the number in full and part-time employment, respectively.

Mr. Rifkind: The latest Department of Employment estimates show the following numbers of employees in June each year:

(thousands)

	All employees in employment	Females in part-time employment
1979	2,102	332
1980	2,082	335
1981	2,002	336
1982	1,950	337
1983	1,899	337
1984	1,901	347
1985	1,906	361
1986	1,892	361

No figures are available for the number of males in part-time employment.

Housing Support Grant

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the level of housing support grant paid by his Department to each local authority in Scotland in each year since 1979 in (a) cash terms and (b) real terms at 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is given in the tables:

Area	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Gordon	2,857,278	2,880,784	2,379,107	2,240,622	1,709,877	1,940,317	1,800,235	1,838,802	2,856,931
Kincardine and Deeside	1,304,661	1,373,533	933,388	817,907	972,194	854,052	942,305	779,199	1,343,829
Maray	4,237,483	4,402,062	3,552,254	2,301,798	1,987,151	1,790,081	1,509,258	682,537	1,144,578
Badenoch and Strathspey	413,089	470,225	435,542	505,386	515,570	487,297	497,879	388,218	488,244
Caithness	1,231,796	1,044,456	878,132	817,378	819,544	826,248	750,997	663,077	821,428
Inverness	2,461,414	2,323,484	1,631,231	1,375,208	1,241,308	1,305,145	1,510,450	1,833,853	1,278,116
Lochaber	1,840,212	1,825,267	1,813,360	1,383,564	1,334,449	1,225,816	1,398,166	1,441,327	1,472,460
Nairn	320,089	351,660	251,993	206,063	265,393	227,117	218,689	181,633	228,168
Ross and Cromarty	3,889,456	4,249,933	4,190,542	3,493,364	3,091,946	3,241,650	3,474,516	3,178,298	3,493,784
Skye and Lochalsh	342,729	343,792	316,747	316,309	323,325	394,993	467,318	586,754	818,200
Sutherland	674,923	729,163	519,316	477,942	446,107	467,987	518,431	522,874	681,115
East Lothian	4,723,964	5,062,507	3,155,554	2,079,858	1,050,527	392,369	23,235	0	0
Edinburgh	11,269,405	12,517,913	7,869,440	2,327,904	0	0	0	0	0
Midlothian	3,496,811	3,334,405	1,791,607	906,746	0	0	0	0	0
West Lothian	4,655,453	4,796,899	2,182,815	0	0	0	0	0	0
Argyll and Bute	3,410,909	3,565,946	2,811,692	2,767,417	2,554,514	2,308,945	2,155,278	1,373,972	1,849,847
Beaenon and Milngavie	464,877	458,385	193,589	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clydebank	3,548,652	4,032,786	3,285,203	2,301,808	1,855,408	1,774,590	1,778,773	804,237	918,555
Clydesdale	1,842,814	1,651,898	578,477	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumbarauld and Kilryth	677,835	670,398	117,762	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	1,982,826	1,812,670	819,727	167,191	0	0	0	0	0
Cunninghame	4,800,670	4,656,897	2,744,500	745,237	0	0	0	0	0
Dunbarton	2,997,918	2,805,151	1,177,708	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Kilbride	327,324	340,284	98,860	0	0	0	0	0	81,269
Eastwood	282,503	303,824	15,462	0	0	0	0	0	0
Glasgow	41,496,149	49,487,984	44,099,691	37,292,928	32,355,851	32,289,404	32,675,646	21,891,239	17,730,436
Hamilton	4,960,259	5,015,434	3,243,635	1,543,988	119,816	0	0	0	0
Inverclyde	5,602,776	6,140,965	4,443,201	3,048,261	1,865,250	1,162,804	562,537	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3,584,819	4,168,598	1,885,952	298,335	0	0	0	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	4,422,325	4,351,788	2,807,798	911,439	447,952	0	0	0	0
Monklands	4,601,208	4,359,605	4,252,050	3,222,528	1,705,278	1,956,032	328,169	0	0
Motherwell	7,919,644	8,193,225	5,737,727	3,296,551	1,037,418	0	0	0	0
Renfrew	6,486,220	6,571,032	2,186,158	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strathkelvin	1,956,176	2,401,186	1,539,073	1,198,935	136,922	2,775	0	0	0
Angus	4,236,548	4,372,617	2,499,757	1,221,795	181,321	0	0	0	0
Dundee	7,740,698	8,602,017	5,285,879	1,820,160	0	0	0	0	0
Perth and Kinross	3,502,848	3,118,176	1,309,294	0	0	0	0	0	0
Orkney Islands	1,074,091	1,103,278	1,082,222	852,422	731,864	779,233	804,942	684,343	776,885
Shetland Islands	2,099,598	1,899,843	2,624,591	2,654,652	2,409,052	2,764,219	2,778,672	2,934,933	3,285,349
Western Isles	1,016,718	1,247,658	1,267,392	1,358,939	1,723,845	1,863,547	2,171,685	2,137,164	2,685,226

Individual entitlements to housing support grant (at 1987-88 prices using GDP deflators)

Area	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
SCOTLAND	371,434,042	334,839,770	216,310,825	130,347,905	86,025,090	76,348,856	69,077,916	46,470,792	46,409,693
Berwickshire	2,270,555	1,917,589	1,387,323	854,876	773,826	556,609	480,512	210,186	261,235
Ettrick and Lauderdale	3,003,944	2,573,291	1,542,740	688,388	445,322	122,643	0	0	0
Roxburgh	3,018,777	2,892,942	2,053,944	1,452,181	1,502,994	1,447,291	1,405,875	994,556	1,225,127
Tweeddale	503,384	419,310	145,706	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clackmannan	3,220,431	2,668,660	1,715,497	859,113	53,690	0	0	0	0
Falkirk	13,850,189	10,974,209	5,916,888	1,861,557	0	0	0	0	0
Stirling	3,358,886	2,811,584	1,538,205	1,663,338	24,365	0	0	0	0
Annandale and Eskdale	1,904,569	2,130,690	1,700,779	1,727,935	1,877,154	1,912,911	1,893,829	1,444,699	1,432,469
Wiltshire	1,997,852	1,328,203	134	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stewartry	955,177	992,371	724,874	514,248	494,482	410,587	359,617	265,120	425,965
Wigtown	1,821,635	1,694,492	1,025,741	563,490	304,478	229,039	102,861	0	321,604
Dumfries	9,383,936	8,920,164	3,741,104	851,000	0	0	0	0	0
Kirkcaldy	10,791,192	9,537,821	4,111,330	867,376	0	0	0	0	0
North East Fife	2,760,716	2,441,808	1,308,738	1,032,984	369,193	99,963	0	0	0
Aberdeen	16,969,333	15,748,775	12,738,110	8,832,172	4,441,889	3,491,377	2,432,866	0	0
Barry and Buchan	8,643,604	8,064,124	5,803,412	4,118,583	2,906,487	2,222,063	1,721,813	583,361	794,646
Gordon	4,973,244	4,197,652	3,178,670	2,791,287	2,039,112	2,218,545	1,937,674	1,921,544	2,856,931
Kincardine and Deeside	2,270,832	2,015,396	1,247,078	1,018,919	1,159,389	976,517	1,014,245	814,261	1,343,829
Maray	7,375,564	6,459,182	4,746,084	2,869,775	2,046,786	1,624,483	1,713,250	1,144,578	0
Badenoch and Strathspey	719,003	689,965	581,918	629,592	614,842	557,172	535,890	405,687	408,244
Caithness	2,144,006	1,532,539	1,170,580	1,018,260	977,346	944,726	808,332	692,914	821,428
Inverness	4,284,222	3,409,268	2,179,450	1,713,185	1,480,321	1,492,294	1,625,766	1,080,374	1,278,116
Lochaber	3,237,798	2,678,230	2,422,788	1,723,955	1,591,396	1,401,589	1,504,909	1,506,183	1,472,460
Nairn	557,132	515,994	336,682	256,706	316,494	239,684	235,385	189,006	228,168
Ross and Cromarty	6,769,805	6,235,962	5,610,910	4,351,909	3,687,297	3,706,480	3,739,778	3,321,314	3,493,784
Skye and Lochalsh	596,538	504,449	423,198	394,046	385,581	451,632	502,995	613,157	818,200
Sutherland	1,174,739	1,069,907	693,846	595,403	532,004	535,093	558,011	546,402	681,115
East Lothian	8,222,310	7,428,239	4,216,062	2,591,013	1,252,005	448,632	25,009	0	0
Edinburgh	19,614,998	18,367,639	10,514,176	2,900,020	0	0	0	0	0
Midlothian	6,086,385	4,892,600	2,393,724	1,129,592	0	0	0	0	0
West Lothian	8,103,063	7,037,356	2,915,341	0	0	0	0	0	0
Argyll and Bute	5,936,868	5,232,342	3,756,636	3,447,550	3,046,383	2,640,031	2,319,823	1,435,797	1,849,847
Beaenon and Milngavie	809,143	672,592	258,650	0	0	0	0	0	74,219
Clydebank	6,176,617	5,917,341	4,389,283	2,742,934	2,212,665	2,029,054	1,914,574	840,426	918,555
Clydesdale	3,207,516	2,423,844	772,890	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumbarauld and Kilryth	1,179,808	983,681	157,339	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	3,451,214	2,659,746	1,095,218	208,281	0	0	0	0	0
Cunninghame	8,355,821	6,833,104	3,666,863	928,390	0	0	0	0	0
Dunbarton	5,218,036	4,116,022	1,573,508	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Kilbride	569,725	499,302	131,016	0	0	0	0	0	81,269
Eastwood	491,711	445,803	20,658	0	0	0	0	0	0
Glasgow	72,226,253	72,614,133	58,920,572	46,458,202	38,585,936	36,896,608	35,170,273	22,876,292	17,730,436
Hamilton	8,633,594	7,359,188	4,333,745	1,923,445	142,886	0	0	0	0
Inverclyde	9,751,929	9,010,689	5,936,458	3,797,415	2,224,402	1,329,542	605,484	0	0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	6,239,568	6,116,607	2,519,777	371,655	0	0	0	0	0
Kyle and Carrick	7,697,292	6,385,412	3,751,434	1,135,438	534,205	0	0	0	0
Monklands	8,008,647	6,396,885	5,881,065	4,014,511	2,033,627	2,236,513	353,223	0	0
Motherwell	13,784,561	12,021,988	7,666,044	4,106,726	1,237,172	0	0	0	0
Renfrew	11,289,611	9,641,730	2,920,875	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strathkelvin	3,404,828	3,523,280	2,056,320	1,493,591	389,870	3,173	0	0	0
Angus	7,373,937	6,415,978	3,339,867	1,522,669	216,234	0	0	0	0
Dundee	13,473,096	12,621,812	7,862,340	2,267,500	0	0	0	0	0
Perth and Kinross	6,096,893	4,575,326	1,749,317	0	0	0	0	0	0

Area	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Orkney Islands	1,869,512	1,618,649	1,445,932	1,061,917	872,784	890,969	866,395	715,137	776,865
Shetland Islands	3,654,462	2,772,982	3,586,695	3,307,871	2,872,912	3,160,588	2,990,810	3,066,998	3,285,349
Western Isles	1,789,652	1,830,699	1,691,333	1,692,943	2,855,770	2,130,766	2,337,483	2,233,331	2,685,226

Student Awards

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give (a) the total number of mandatory student awards paid by his Department in each academic year since 1979 and (b) the total value of those awards in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Rifkind: The value of students' maintenance allowances and tuition fees paid under the Students' Allowances Scheme and the post graduate students' allowances scheme, in cash terms, and in real terms on a constant 1986-87 base (1987-88 figures are not yet available) was as follows:

Academic year	Number of students	Value of awards (maintenance etc. plus tuition etc. fees)	
		Actual £ million	At 1986-87 prices £ million
1984-85	59,931	99.4	107.7
1985-86	58,384	99.5	102.6
1986-87	59,117	102.2	102.2

¹ Provisional.

Notes:

(1) In session 1982-83 the rate of tuition fees was reduced.

(2) 1986-87 price equivalents are based on the average GDP deflator for the first quarter of each year (mid-academic session).

Education Statistics

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing (a) the total number of pupils on school rolls and (b) the pupil-teacher ratio for primary and secondary schools in each regional council area in Scotland for each academic year since 1979.

Mr. Rifkind: The information for education authority schools is set out in the tables:

Table 1
Pupils and pupil teacher ratios in education authority primary schools

Regions	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	¹ 1986-87
<i>Number of Pupils</i>								
Borders	10,135	9,643	9,156	8,686	8,353	8,219	8,246	8,213
Central	29,737	28,559	27,258	25,850	24,897	24,287	24,158	23,754
Dumfries and Galloway	15,069	14,223	13,457	12,799	12,480	12,285	12,313	12,321
Fife	36,766	35,103	33,733	32,257	31,388	31,005	31,105	30,602
Grampian	49,831	48,352	47,128	45,767	43,827	43,274	43,156	42,941
Highland	22,000	21,275	20,568	19,822	19,460	19,168	19,290	19,394
Lothian	71,816	68,112	64,688	61,461	58,327	55,745	54,964	54,386
Strathclyde	261,721	247,143	232,691	219,231	208,934	204,311	203,521	203,337
Tayside	39,694	37,925	35,964	34,278	32,757	31,871	31,335	31,298
<i>Pupil-Teacher Ratios</i>								
Borders	18.3	18.4	18.2	18.2	17.9	18.2	17.7	18.2
Central	19.7	19.5	19.1	18.6	18.7	18.9	19.3	20.4
Dumfries and Galloway	19.2	19.1	19.2	19.4	19.1	19.1	19.3	19.1
Fife	21.0	20.7	20.6	20.4	19.9	20.1	20.2	20.2
Grampian	19.0	18.9	18.9	19.0	18.8	19.4	19.3	19.4
Highland	19.1	19.1	19.1	19.0	18.9	18.8	18.7	18.8
Lothian	18.9	18.5	18.6	19.8	19.9	20.1	20.2	20.1
Strathclyde	21.4	21.6	21.6	21.6	21.6	21.6	21.6	21.5
Tayside	20.3	20.8	20.6	20.6	20.5	20.3	20.2	20.0

¹ Provisional.

Pupils and Pupil/Teacher ratios in Education Authority Secondary Schools

Regions	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87 ¹
<i>Number of pupils</i>								
Borders	7,351	7,411	7,423	7,501	7,417	7,140	6,907	6,684
Central	22,736	22,283	22,209	21,910	21,479	20,866	20,120	19,300
Dumfries and Galloway	11,403	11,611	11,838	11,814	11,569	11,181	10,747	10,204
Fife	26,624	26,792	26,847	26,665	26,194	25,208	24,371	23,606
Grampian	34,471	34,444	34,603	34,866	35,366	34,635	34,216	33,247
Highland	16,113	16,128	16,119	16,021	15,958	15,629	15,183	14,853
Lothian	52,720	52,316	51,515	50,240	48,981	47,685	45,415	43,328
Strathclyde	203,995	201,712	198,957	195,428	189,219	180,499	171,505	162,258
Tayside	29,666	29,248	29,064	28,667	28,131	27,293	26,388	25,221

Regions	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87 ¹
	Pupil/Teacher Ratios							
Borders	14.2	14.2	14.1	14.4	14.0	13.7	13.3	13.3
Central	14.2	14.4	14.4	14.3	14.3	14.2	13.8	13.8
Dumfries and Galloway	14.2	14.3	14.1	14.0	13.4	13.0	13.1	12.9
Fife	14.7	14.7	14.9	14.7	14.4	14.1	14.0	13.6
Grampian	13.4	13.4	13.8	13.8	13.8	13.6	13.6	13.5
Highland	14.0	13.9	13.7	13.7	13.6	13.2	12.9	12.7
Lothian	13.5	13.3	13.4	13.7	13.8	13.7	13.4	13.0
Strathclyde	15.0	15.0	15.0	14.7	14.3	13.9	13.7	13.5
Tayside	14.0	14.0	13.9	13.8	13.5	13.3	12.9	12.5

¹ Provisional.

Sewage Disposal (Berwickshire)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will review the procedures permitting sewage disposal in the North sea above St. Abbs Head, Berwickshire.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Sewage sludge disposal at sea is strictly controlled by licence issued annually under Part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 and I see no reason to review the current arrangements.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amounts of sewage discharged off St. Abbs Head, Berwickshire, by Lothian region council, the dates of the disposal over the last five years and the location at sea where the disposal took place.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Particulars of sewage sludge disposal operations off St. Abbs Head are already available for public inspection within the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. Total amounts dumped during the months October to May in the last five years for which returns have been made are:—

Year	Tonnes
1981-82	150,584
1982-83	137,430
1983-84	139,817
1984-85	120,395
1985-86	121,395

Detailed information about individual trips is not readily available.

The disposal site is some 10 miles north of St. Abbs Head and is charted.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any studies have been carried out to assess the impact of the sewage disposal being dumped off St. Abbs Head, Berwickshire or the quality of the bathing water off Pease Bay.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The sea disposal of sewage sludge is strictly controlled by licence and the operations are closely monitored on an annual basis. Monitoring results indicate no foreseeable adverse consequences to the marine environment.

The bathing water of Pease Bay is one of 20 waters included in a two-year monitoring programme over the 1986 and 1987 bathing seasons. These waters are being monitored in line with the requirements of EC Directive 76/160/EEC and my right hon. and learned Friend expects to publish the results after the end of the 1987 bathing season.

Drunken Persons (Designated Places)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many places have been designated in terms of section 5 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980; whether he has any plans to increase the numbers of places designated; and whether any such plans include increased provision in the sheriffdom of Lothian and Borders.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: One place has been designated, at Albyn House, Aberdeen. The provision of such facilities is a matter for voluntary organisations, who may be eligible for grant under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, or local authorities. A voluntary body called the Lothian alcohol recovery service is seeking to establish a designated place in Edinburgh and my Department is arranging to meet its representatives.

SDA (Expenditure)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish, for each parliamentary constituency, the amounts spent on (a) industrial investments and (b) environmental improvements by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1983.

Mr. Lang: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Animal Medicines

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he proposes to undertake any review of the licensing and control of animal medicines parallel to that into human medicines announced by the Secretary of State for Social Services on 11 March, *Official Report*, column 238.

Mr. MacGregor: The issues arising from the licensing and control of animal medicines range widely. In particular the criterion of safety laid down in the Medicines Act 1968 has to be taken to cover not only the safety of the treated animal but the safety of the consumer of produce from that animal, the safety of mill and farm workers who may be exposed to feed containing animal medicines over long periods and the safety of the environment generally. There have been far reaching changes in the use of animal medicines since the Act came into force which demand wider ranges of expertise for the necessarily rigorous assessments of animal medicines. We must ensure that the necessary resources are efficiently deployed.

I have therefore decided to commission an independent study to run parallel with that on human medicines. It will be carried out by Mr. Peter Cunliffe who has recently retired from the Chairmanship of the Pharmaceuticals Division of ICI, who is also involved in the parallel study on human medicines. His terms of reference will be:—

To consider and advise on the best use of resources for the control of animal medicines under the United Kingdom and EC legislation bearing in mind

- (a) the need to ensure the safety, quality and efficacy of all medicines;
- (b) the need in particular to ensure that veterinary medicines are safe not only for treated animals but also for consumers, for farm and mill workers, and for the environment generally;
- (c) the need for the licensing arrangements to be self-financing.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Favell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on recent discussions with fellow European Economic Community Ministers on the funding of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply, 2 July 1987, c. 154*]: The European Council on 30 June agreed that the present system of funding CAP guarantee expenditure, by means of advances from the Community to national intervention agencies, should be adjusted in order to keep expenditure in 1987 within the budget provision. Discussions are proceeding on the 1988 budget and a general review of Community finances.

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CORRECTION

**The Index to the Parliamentary Debates in both volumes above
should read Session 1987-88, and not 1986-87 as printed.**

***January 1988*
LONDON: HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE**

INDEX TO THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

SIXTH SERIES

OFFICIAL REPORT

VOLUME 118

SESSION 1986-87

17th June-3rd July 1987

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

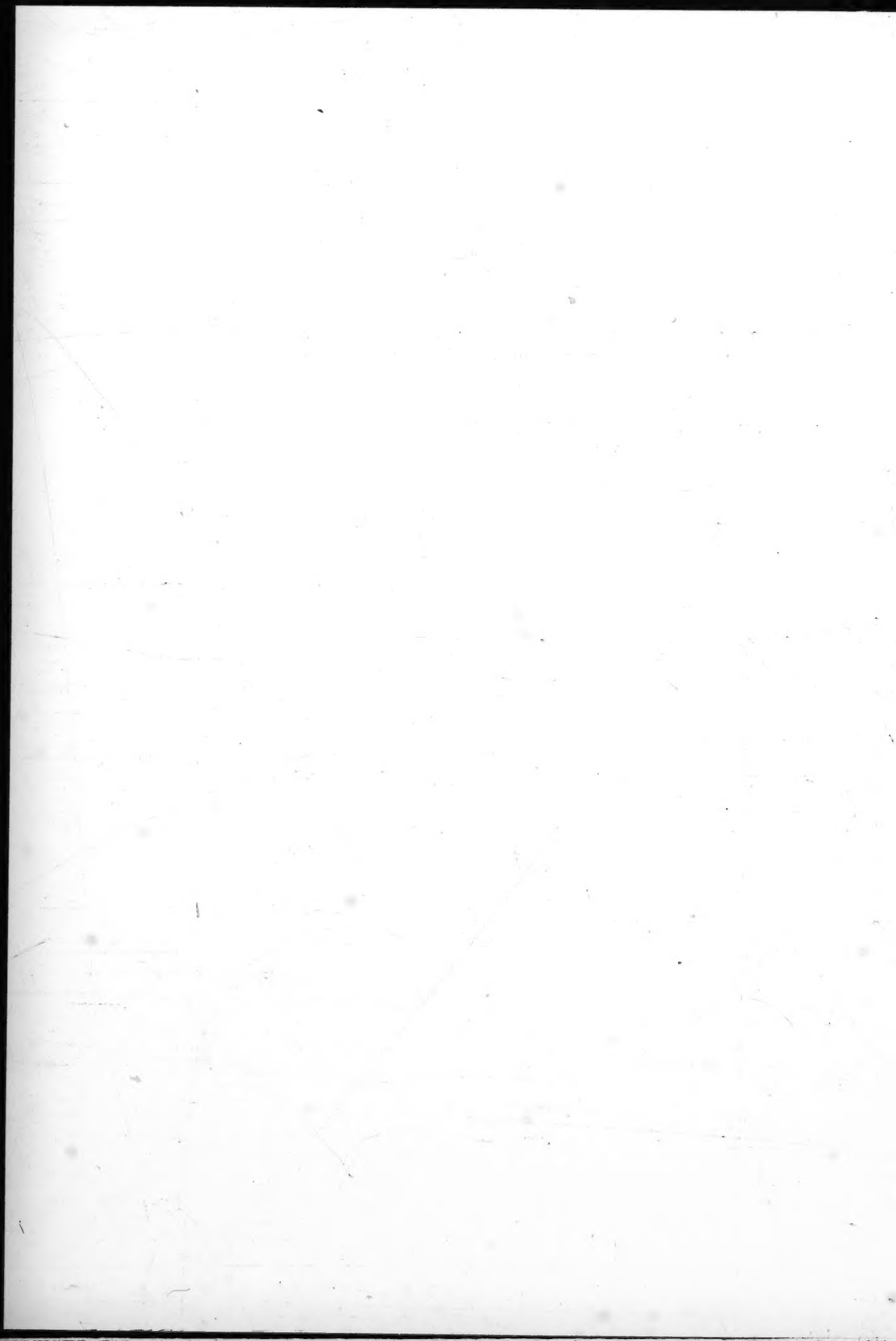
The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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